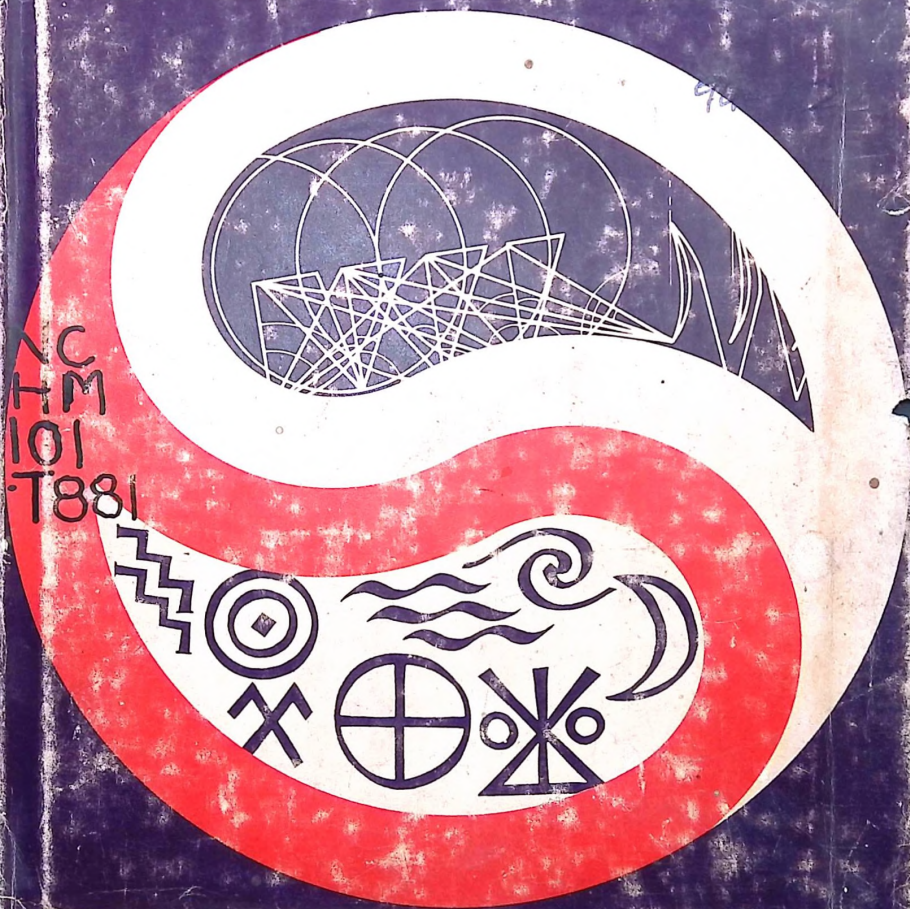


THEORY OF CULTURE

RAYMOND TSCHUMI



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TSCHUMI: THEORY OF CULTURE

THEORY OF CULTURE is a systematic analysis of the linguistic aspects of culture, and an evaluation of the fundamental aspects and modes of cultural experience. Starting with the hypothesis that culture, like language, is all-embracing (even though specific sciences deal mainly with its social functions), the book goes on to analyze the linguistic structures interwoven with culture as a whole, and attempts to encompass the general relationships between the operations of cultural experience and its contexts.

From this global perspective, culture appears to be motivated by two essential human needs—the need for expression and the need for knowledge—which cannot be reduced to their biological or social functions or aspects. And in response to these more and more distinct needs, the experiences of identity and reality develop two different types of language: the artistic, and the scientific, each with its autonomous structures.

This is a highly innovative and important formulation of a rational theory of culture based on a study of the relationships between thought, language and experience, and provides a description of culture as an indivisible and dynamic totality that can be systematically and intuitively analyzed, provided each of its elements is constantly seen as a function of the whole.

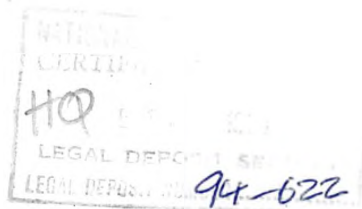
Finally, the author investigates some of the apparently insoluble problems inherent in a rational concept of culture, such as creative freedom, objectivity, and the element of unpredictability. Through the adoption of this novel approach, the great variety of descriptive and expressive languages—and especially their manifestations in the sciences, the arts, literature, psychology, linguistics, philosophy, the social sciences, and the corresponding metalanguages—can be reduced to a single perspective of the unity of culture.





THEORY OF CULTURE





THEORY OF CULTURE

by Raymond Tschumi



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Raymond Tschumi

THEORY OF CULTURE

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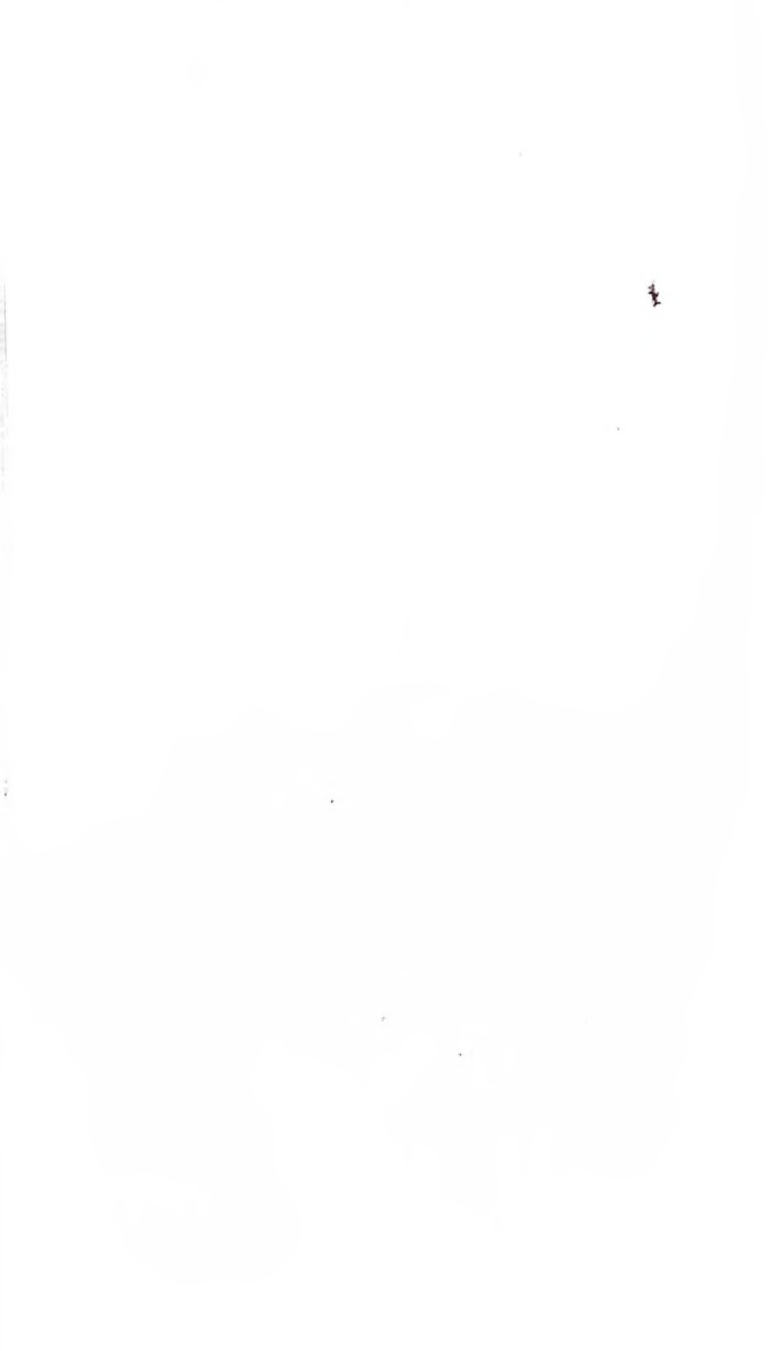
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PART ONE

**LANGUAGE
AND
THOUGHT**



CHAPTER 1

Their Relationship

LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT: THEIR INTERDEPENDENCE

When it is said that language proceeds from consciousness, that thought precedes words, or that one must think before speaking, a relationship is established between two terms, the existence of which seems so immediate and irrefutable an admission that further investigation appears to be futile. Whoever wishes to know more will find himself facing insuperable obstacles and skirting bottomless abysses. Indeed, the first question raised by this relationship leads to an impasse. It is as useless to ask oneself whether either language or thought exists beyond this relationship as to ask which of the two terms determines the other. Since there is no thought without language, the latter being the evidence of the former, and since common sense supposes the consciousness of a speaker and a hearer behind the driest and most impersonal words, the relationship between thought and language, as well as their existence or definition, constitutes a problem which could be formulated as follows:

In the extreme case a philosophical difficulty can be reduced to a linguistic difficulty,¹ and conversely, the ineffable (that which cannot be expressed in language) can be reduced from the outset to a failure on the speaker's part and becomes a blockage of thought.

THEIR LIMITS: THE INEXPRESSIBLE AND THE INCONCEIVABLE

As an example of these difficulties, it will suffice to mention the impossibility of expressing and communicating the feeling of nothingness, as well as the fact that the absurd is inconceivable. Either nothingness *is* and this

¹ There is no question here of denying philosophical problems, as the English analysts do, under the influence of Wittgenstein. We need only recognize that a philosophical problem implies a linguistic problem as well.

constitutes a contradiction in terms—or language is playing one of its tricks on us by creating an inconceivable notion of which there is no proof beyond the word itself. Conversely, the notion of the absurd, which can be applied to a large number of concrete phenomena, and the experience of which is verifiable, cannot be conceived; for as soon as an attempt is made to account for it, words which have a meaning must be used, which by that very token cause this notion to recede even as they approach it. To say that life is absurd is not a contradiction, for even without taking the Theater of the Absurd into consideration, inexhaustible linguistic resources are at hand to substantiate this statement, which can be reduced to establishing that death makes life absurd. But whoever tries to explain this notion will fail. If something is to be explained, that something must have a meaning; or, if this is not the case, a meaning must be conferred upon it. But the absurd as a notion remains by definition that which, because it has no meaning, cannot be conceived of and much less explained.

In the case of nothingness, it is language which refuses to express and communicate the idea; strictly speaking, a purely symbolic language (such as the number 0, or -1) represents realities proper to thought alone.

In the case of the absurd, it is thought which refuses to conceive a notion which language easily undertakes to express and communicate, since that notion is confirmed by a certain number of impressions and occurrences.

THEIR OPPOSITION: BEING AND NOT-BEING

This dual example adequately demonstrates that if language denotes being but adjusts itself to contradiction, thought does not admit contradiction and yet conceives negations clearly.² If these conclusions are accepted, we can take a further step and ask ourselves whether we have reached the point where we can define the nature of the relationship and of its two terms.

One initial statement can certainly be made: although we have defined some aspects of each of the two terms, their character is defined by opposition. Far from isolating them, we have linked them through a dialectic process. At any rate, our attempt to conceive each of the two terms separately as an independent entity has failed. In order to conceive

² Language is evasive about the origins of non-being. "Rien" is an affirmation, and, like "nothing" and "nullam," refers to the thing which is. In accounting, a negative number becomes passive. In physics one speaks of anti-matter, and in mathematics 0, -1, and $\sqrt{-1}$ have long been considered as aberrations of signs, inconceivable, and lacking reference to anything at all. Language fears a vacuum, fears absence and death, and covers them with a veil or keeps silent about them. It designates them only as antitheses.

thought, words are needed, and in order to conceive language, one must think.

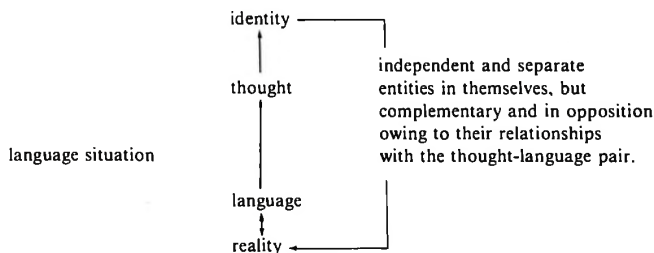
This platitude, however, masks something quite marvelous. The fact that thought and language need each other also means that they invent each other. As for asking which determines the other, one might as well ask which comes first, the chicken or the egg.

THEIR MUTUAL REFERENCE: REALITY, IDENTITY

Thought, which implies a conscious identity, invents words which, by their meaning, communicate a state of consciousness. These words, which presuppose a reality, generate concepts which place the speaker and the hearer in relationship with this reality.³

Thus, we see that in any language situation one entity must be added to each term of the relationship: the person of the speaker and that of the hearer, indissolubly linked with thought and a reality (a being or things) indissolubly linked to language. For the moment, the two new elements can be represented as follows:

Figure 1



These necessary links are not reversible. Thought testifies to a person and language to a reality, but a person may not necessarily be thinking and a reality can exist without being expressed in language.

Now we understand why neither thought nor language can be conceived separately and as independent entities. Each of them is related to a separate entity, independent and opposed to the other. Thought implies an identity which stands opposite to the reality implied by language. But

³See *La Sémantique*, by Pierre Guiraud (in the series *Que sais-je*, No. 655, p. 17): "La communication implique un locuteur (ou sujet parlant), un auditeur, une chose que le locuteur veut communiquer à l'auditeur et des signes linguistiques au moyen desquels il la communique."

since language and thought are interdependent, this identity and this reality will also become independent insofar as they are linked with language and with thought, which is not necessarily the case.

THEIR INTERPLAY

Here we again find the distinction between the subject and the object, and at the same time are in a position to ascertain to what extent this distinction applies to what we have called a language situation.⁴ Indeed, we can clearly and distinctly conceive a person as well as a reality, but their opposition is made necessary by the profound connection linking thought with language.⁵ As soon as we speak we become a person endowed with active thought, to whom contradiction is forbidden, and confront a given and irreducible reality to which language confers a meaning and which is represented by signs. That this reality may be absurd in itself in no way alters the fact that the language which signifies it (and we have seen that the relationship is irreversible, for this reality can also be conceived as independent of language) gives it a meaning. As for the person endowed with thought (and we have seen that the person can be conceived of as deprived of active thought), he contents himself with being conscious; that is, with being able to conceive its object which—always in a language situation—has a meaning, a necessity, whereas the person is free, and because he is free, chooses words which, by being articulated, order and judge reality. Since the relationships are not reversible, the language situation constitutes a kind of gratuitous game. Each on one side, the person plays the game of thinking and reality in some sort plays the language game, but the former can do and the latter can be something else which we can successfully conceive but are forbidden to express; for the rule of the game is such that the person is free to choose signs and so to order reality, whereas reality lends itself to the language game, the condition of which is that it has a meaning.⁶ Any

⁴ "Ainsi la voie du langage conduit, par la seule nécessité de son mouvement intrinsèque, à comprendre que l'hétérogénéité primitive du moi et du monde n'est que le reflet d'une division du moi qui trouve son fondement dernier dans l'essence du langage auquel le moi est culturellement porté à recourir pour se comprendre et se situer." (Max Loreau, "Poésie, peinture, et fondement du langage," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 1967, No. 81, p. 321.)

⁵ "Plus encore: parce que les mots maintiennent, sans qu'on le veuille, la distinction du moi et de l'autre, ils demeurent dans la division du sujet et de l'objet, plus exactement: ils me font demeurer, au sein même de ma pensée, dans la division du sujet et de l'objet." (Max Loreau, *ibid.*, p. 322.)

⁶ The autonomy of language with regard to reality, owing to the conventional nature of the connection between the *signifiant* and the *signifié*, as well as, by contrast, the close interdependence of language and thought, raises a problem which until now has seldom been studied; however, in a recent article André Martinet points out some viewpoints which he opens to analysis: "E il lettore che deve scoprire che l'attribuzione 'arbitraria' di un dato

other possibility remains outside the game and does not count. Mistakes and trickery are part of the game, but they make their effects felt.

THE STAKES IN THE GAME: THE SIGN

In the course of these considerations we have used the term "sign" without making the slightest effort to define it. The linguists who try to approach this notion have remarked that every sign is at the same time a paradigm and a syntagm. In other words, every sign is the result of a choice (for instance, the choice of words in a vocabulary) and of a combination (for instance, the word order in a sentence) which manifest both the freedom of the person playing the language game by choosing a "signifiant" and a readiness on the part of reality to play the game by becoming the "signifié."

If we admit that every word is the result of a dual activity, that of representing and associating, any language unit will simultaneously appear under its figurative or paradigmatic and its associative or syntagmatic aspects. This distinction leads us to ask the following two questions: What do words represent, and what do they link together? We ask ourselves these questions, without knowing that we do so, whenever we hear words or read texts. Such frequent questioning becomes unconscious.

Now, the study of language forces us to become aware of many unconscious processes. If we listen to the answers given with regard to ordinary language by the linguists, and with regard to literary language by the critics, we come to the conclusion that the linguists, at present in full spate of activity, fail to agree on the component parts and functions of language, whereas interpretative criticism, without claiming scientific exactness, is based upon old traditions and, despite its fluctuations, has often reached very high levels. Does this mean that ordinary language, whose functional character has often been stressed, causes us to shift our attention to that of which it is a function?

The tentative answer, borrowed from linguistics—the distinction between the model and the combination—has so far been formulated only

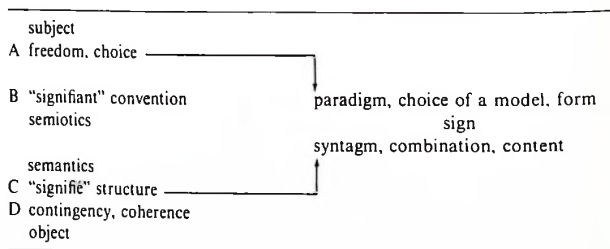
signifiant a un dato *signifié* non è che uno degli aspetti di un' autonomia linguistica, un'altra faccia della quale comporta la scelta e la delimitazione dei *signifiés*. . . . Le implicazioni di tutto ciò superano di molto quelle che derivano dall'insegnamento relativo al *signifiant*. Noi misuriamo così fino a che punto la lingua che noi parliamo determina la visione che ciascuno di noi ha del mondo. Noi scopriamo che essa tiene continuamente sotto controllo la nostra attività mentale, e che non esiste un pensiero autonomo che crea dei miti che la lingua si contenta di nominare, come Adamo nominava gli animali e le cose che il Signore gli andava presentando, ma che invece i miti germogliano sulla lingua, cambiando di forma e di sesso a seconda degli sviluppi della lingua, come la dea *Nerthus* che l'evoluzione della declinazione germanica ha mascolinizzato sotto la forma del *Njord* scandinavo." (*Il Verri*, 24 1967, p. 86.)

in the form of a hypothesis on which some eminent linguists seem to agree. This distinction throws some light on what happens in spontaneous speech or in the less conscious activities leading to the choice and arrangement of words.

Can this answer carry us any further? In the opinion of a reputed linguist, Benveniste, the outworn critical distinction between form and content is to be found under this linguistic distinction. So outworn, indeed, that we try to do without it under the pretext that it has been overworked and that, in esthetics, the dogma of the identity between form and content must prevail.

It looks as though the linguists are going to grant a postponement, perhaps a future, to the outmoded distinction. It appears to us in a new light. We have always admitted that a form or a word had to be chosen and that the meaning of a sentence had to be based on a certain combination of words; but who would have seen an essential aspect of language in this choice and this combination? In such a case language could be compared to a conventional game with rules of its own, played within the following frame:

Figure 2



(From now on, the letters A, B, C, and D will represent the levels of a language situation: identity, thought, language, reality.)

We have seen, on the one hand, that the language game is gratuitous. There are orators who speak for the sake of the word and writers who write for the sake of writing. Whatever the circumstances may be, words appropriate to the occasion can be found. In that case we invent, in purely formal language, fictitious realities to which that language refers. On the other side, if a person chooses his signs judiciously and if their arrangement corresponds to a coherent reality, the game becomes completely serious: in that case we can trust language and play the game heart and soul: nothing else counts.

FORM

A judicious choice of signs and their coherent combination are the two necessary conditions to make their reference adequate or real. Let us turn our attention here to the first of these. We must find out first of all in what way the person is free, for it would be equally possible to advance the idea that it is reality (the being referred to by language) which remains free as long as language does not refer to it—as long as reality does not enter the language game, which makes reality logical and meaningful, places it in a perspective and guides it in a certain direction. The fundamental difference between these two kinds of availability is that reality does not enter the language game voluntarily, and that once in the game it is determined by it, whereas the person, as we have seen, is not obliged to be in the game and may play it in a negative way, expressing itself by means of signs which, instead of referring to the person, refer to the "signifié" which, by definition, remains external and alien to the person. In this way, for example, melancholy can be expressed by the contemplation of many-colored dead leaves. By such means the person finds expression in meaningful objects or images. Nor is this all; not satisfied with remaining available and in a way negatively present, this person takes advantage of its availability to act in the only way permitted to it: by opening itself. Contrary to reality, which is signified, the person signifies and intervenes voluntarily, either spontaneously or arbitrarily, in the game, but always on its own initiative. In semantic terms, there is an external stimulus and a motivation behind every sign.

Now this initiative, originating in a conscious person, can be manifested negatively by opening up the consciousness to reality. It can also be manifested by direct self-expression, but a language situation where the "signifiant" would have no "signifié" is rendered impossible by the very nature of signs and still more by the nature of words, and this amounts to saying that the arbitrary component parts of expression are necessarily limited. We have established from the outset that thought is endowed with the faculty of conceiving negation, but that ordinary language, apart from purely symbolic languages (numbers, mathematics, symbolic logic) refuses to transmit this pure notion, or does so through the mediation of positive "signifiants" (for instance, when we say that "nothingness exists") the "signifiant" always referring to a "signifié," and the latter always implying a positive notion of being. This demonstrates that any notion of being is derived from a language situation and does not necessarily correspond to an intrinsic quality of reality.

The chief role of the person in the language game is not so much to express himself as to take the initiative of opening himself to reality by introducing it into the language game. The more consciousness opens up

(digs into itself, manifests itself negatively), the more reality it will contain. In this sense it can be stated that consciousness is a sort of pure but unsubstantial receptacle, consisting in a negative form in which the "signifié" takes its place. However concrete the form of a sculpture may be, it does not exist in nature, for it must be created. It originates in the sculptor's person.

CONTENT

A sculptor makes use of natural materials just as a writer makes use of words with a phonetic and graphic content. The form he gives them arises from his inner freedom: it is his style, the result of a series of choices, for he must choose: he cannot take the whole of nature as his material. Besides, his material will never be reality as signified, which does not count, but as signifying. In other words, the content of language, or if you like, the meaning as opposed to the form, only signifies reality, from which content borrows a few elements in the form of symbols (sounds, colors, movements, etc.) without ever becoming confused with reality.

From the point of view of form, these symbols are models or figurative substitutes (paradigms) chosen from a conventional and virtual vocabulary. From the point of view of content these same symbols are used as syntagms, and as such establish either internal relationships of similarity and contrast, or external relationships of association and representation.

To sum up, the connections between language and thought can be divided into a series of parallel language situations:

Figure 3

A person (speaker-hearer)	identity	freedom	convention	spirit	creation
B thought	non-contradiction	choice	paradigm	form	style
C language	reference to the being	arrangement	syntagm	content	symbols
D signified reality	being	contingency	logical connections	matter	adequation

COMMUNICATION: ITS HERMETIC NATURE

Whatever the subtlety of these choices and the complexity of these connections, such symbols are further used as a means of communication between speaker and hearer by means of a very complex process. By way of simplifying things, we will begin with the diagram of the word

according to Ferdinand de Saussure:

Figure 4

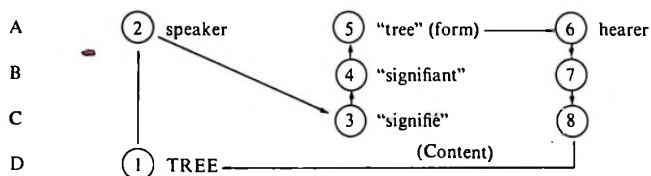
D	C	B	A
TREE the reality	ARBOR the image of the reality, or the concept, or the "signifié"	tree the image of the phonic form the "signifiant"	"tree" the name or phonic and graphic form
	the word according to De Saussure		

TREE and "tree," as concrete substances, do not enter the language game (or system), for "le signe linguistique unit non une chose et un nom mais un concept et une image acoustique."⁷

De Saussure, like his followers and even his contradictors, emphasizes the paradoxically hermetic nature of communication. Whatever its contents may be, communication takes place inside a system where neither reality (the thing referred to or named) nor the noun itself (element of a virtual vocabulary) are included. Thus, communication is reduced to transmitting phonic and graphic signals, the choice of which constitutes form, and the arrangement of which (not the signals themselves) makes up the content:

Figure 5

Circuit of communication:



For communication really to take place, (3) and (8) must be identical (independent of form and content).

Whatever its form and contents may be, this closed-circuit system constantly refers to an external reality and originates continuously from the initiative of a person who, despite his intervention inside the system,

⁷Guiraud, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

excludes himself from the signified reality in order to be reduced to a pure and absent identity.

CONSEQUENCE: SOLITUDE

Thus we return to our premises, and in particular to the hypothesis of a distinction between the self and the non-self, created by language. It is useless to object that this hypothesis, of a purely linguistic character and deprived of scientific or philosophical foundations, cannot be verified: to question it is to confirm it by the mere fact that an examination creates a language situation.* By playing the game, the person excludes himself from reality and thus is immersed in irremediable solitude. For him any language situation is tragic and inescapable, for the more he opens himself to reality, the more he becomes available and sacrifices himself.

The person who takes the initiative of language, or, if you like, of the thought behind words, voluntarily isolates himself from reality by building a closed dwelling place, his language. But he is not likely to find satisfaction in this confinement, and since his solitude is absolute and there is no way he can escape from his dwelling place, he undertakes to broaden it by displacing its limits in the only two possible directions, either toward the outside, that is, toward reality, or toward the inside, that is toward himself.⁹

*F. Gonseth has shown very convincingly that all knowledge rests on language, and concludes that "même en renonçant à tout ce qui pourrait trahir un instrument de mesure, nous ne pourrions pas éviter la mise en oeuvre d'un certain 'tout fait.' Ce 'tout fait' ne s'introduit pas du fait de telle ou telle circonstance, il est présent d'avance dans le langage dont l'usage doit nous rester permis." (*Le Problème du Temps*, p. 165.)

Language interposes itself between an observable event and the observer, not as a measuring instrument, but as a basis to which that confrontation is owed. There cannot be a "problème de l'évidence sensible" or "rapport d'adéquation entre l'objet qui donne lieu à la perception et la signification que celle-ci prendra pour l'observateur" except through the language which raises this problem and underlies this relationship: "Si loin qu'on ait poussé l'analyse du langage, il reste ainsi un préalable à toute explication" (p. 164). The logic of language precedes the "données immédiates de l'observation" which confirm it with evidence.

"Any scientific or literary field which is included in a language situation confers what F. Gonseth calls a horizon: "Les pensées de l'auteur (surtout s'il est philosophe) se meuvent dans l'horizon qui lui est propre et qui ne se réduit pas simplement à un certain horizon du sens commun de 'tout le monde.' Le langage par lequel il réussit le mieux à s'exprimer, à saisir lui-même et à formuler pour lui-même ce qu'il estime avoir à dire, n'est pas non plus la langue courante de l'usage commun. Non seulement il en diffère par un style plus ou moins personnel, ce sont les mots eux-mêmes qui, en se chargeant d'un sens approprié, s'écartent parfois du sens que tous les autres leur donnent; ce sont les formes verbales qui, pour convenir, doivent souvent être pliées à un jeu inhabituel; c'est, en un mot, tout le discours qui s'organise et se réorganise pour répondre aux besoins de l'auteur. Enfin, si l'auteur se fait une vision des choses qui lui est propre, et si, pour en parler adéquatement, il lui faut une langue qui soit la sienne, c'est, bien entendu, qu'il pense ainsi s'assurer une intervention plus efficace dans son univers, dans le domaine où son activité s'exerce, dans son domaine de réalité." (F. Gonseth, "Langage et philosophie ouverte," *Dialectica*, Vol. 20, Fasc. 1, 1966. p. 97.)

CHAPTER 2

The Transcending of Their Levels in Science and in Literature

HOW SOLITUDE IS TRANSCENDED BY SCIENCE

On the one hand, thought invents more and more efficacious means of penetrating reality. This can be obtained only by developing the network of its reference to reality. This form of transcendence engages thought in a specifically scientific activity in which concern for content is of primary importance. For, as we have seen, form does not exist in nature. Thought penetrates reality and gives it meaning by arranging symbols, by conferring upon reality a coherence which, we believe, is not necessarily characteristic of reality in itself (independently of language.)¹⁰ The more scientific reality penetrates reality, the more reality seems coherent, so that one may ask whether in the extreme case thought is not capable of extending the network of language to the totality of signifiable reality.

HOW SOLITUDE IS TRANSCENDED BY LITERATURE

On the other hand, thought attempts to extend the frontiers of language toward the inside. This way of transcending solitude tends to become more and more differentiated from the scientific enterprise, not only because the preoccupation with form is of primary importance, but also because thought, to the degree to which it opens, is distinguished from its object with increasing precision; so that, in the extreme case, thought is capable of revealing its identity, no longer negatively, as is the case in mathematical and scientific languages (by a sort of abnegation of the

¹⁰"Le problème du langage, de reconnaître quelle est sa fonction, de comprendre comment il l'exerce et comment il évolue pour continuer à l'exercer, n'est donc qu'un aspect du problème de la connaissance." (F. Gonseth, *Le Problème du Temps*, Editions du Griffon, Neuchâtel, 1964, p. 144.)

self), but by transparency—by a kind of dilatation of the self which allows it to appear behind the screen of signified reality. What shows through the highest levels of poetry is not only the thought contained in all words, but also the person himself who, as we have seen, must be added to the first term of the thought-language relationship.

HISTORICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DUAL TRANSCENDENCE

The historical consequences of this growing difference between scientific language and literary language are worthy of interest. It is obvious at first sight that the progressive course of the sciences has no equivalent in literature. Besides, works of science are constantly being supplanted, while the significance of certain literary works increases with time. How can we explain this historical difference?

A superficial explanation is offered by the theory of scientific progress and by the recognition, on the part of posterity, of certain immortal works. The deep and dynamic cause of these differences can only reside in the division of two fundamental language situations, the one aiming at signifying reality (semantic field) and the other aiming at revelation of the person through reality (semiotic field); both have their origin in the same effort to broaden the horizon of thought or to transcend the solitude inherent in any language situation. Now, if the effects of this cause are manifested by a historical development which is extremely complex and so vast that no one may claim to see it as a whole, it ought to be possible to locate them in a conceptual perspective which would start off from the two initial and diverging language situations.

If we adopt this hypothesis, we must first verify whether the development of sciences and literatures progresses in the direction of the limits mentioned above. The progressive character of scientific development seems to make confirmation of our hypothesis quite probable, whereas literary history seems to give no answer. Indeed, literary history establishes that, ever since antiquity, great works have reached that limit situation where the personality of the writer is imprinted upon a vast range of reality. Literary history also establishes that certain minor works are more easily classifiable, while major works, even though they form part of their period, become detached from their historical context and exert increasing influence on the following generations. Endowed with this kind of survival they make their presence felt in any time, and become part of a cultural context.

If these explanations are acceptable, it is useless to seek confirmation of our hypothesis in the works themselves as they are located in their period, even though we take the fluctuations of their influence into account; but

at any rate it would be useful to consider them as living works, in the sense that they are always present. We would then see how they behave in their confrontation with posterity, for it is a paradoxical fact that literary creation, which results in the written work, starts its life only at the time when the text is finished, and that even long afterward it is capable of being transformed. It is not enough to object at this point that we are the ones who transform it or see it differently. The strictly literary work, as we have suggested, discloses an entity which scientific work tends to neutralize. This entity may be called the thought, not only of the author writing at a particular time, but above all of a conscious and responsible person, the thought that continues to be transmitted from generation to generation and to live a new life in whoever assumes it, and by assuming it, transforms it. The dynamism of the literary work is a dynamism in depth, not a progressive one, and it permits the literary work to be located in a spiritual rather than a historical perspective. But it is impossible to locate all of a literature in that perspective. Any attempt to do so is risky, for the majority of minor works resist such an attempt, and besides, posterity has its word to say.

Though these first considerations on the relationship between thought and language do not contribute to the unity of the disciplines concerned (semantics, logic, psychology, history of science, literary history, etc.), they entitle us at least to suppose that language, by establishing the distinction between subject and object, engages the activity of thought on two diverging paths, the one leading to the progressive exploration of a reality for which we are increasingly responsible, the other to the revelation in depth of an inner world of which we are unaware to what extent it contains all life.

This transcendence of solitude in two opposite directions can be represented by the following diagram in Figure 6.

It is represented by two supplementary levels, A' and D'.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND LANGUAGE

The mechanism of transcendence functions according to the rules of interaction between thought and language and moves in two opposite directions.

Scientific transcendence, as a result of an ever-wider opening and the increasing transparency of an impersonal, and hence universal self, leads to a gradual penetration of data by rational structures where the impersonal self is disclosed in a negative way. Owing to its attitude of pure openness to the presence of data, the scientific self seems to be passive and incapable of modifying such data, since it intervenes only by interposing a textual mirror between itself and data. The history of the sciences,

Figure 6

A' transcendent identity	cosmic consciousness		
A identity	continuous creation (author, readers, posterity)	attitude activity	transparency of the impersonal self objectivity
B thought	exegesis (after a permanent form is achieved)	action on the text	transcendence of the text in provisional form
C language	transcendence of meaning, criticism (expandable reference)	action on the meaning	progress of knowledge, verification (adequate reference)
D given reality	responsibility, taking over	action on the object	penetration, exploitation of data
D' created reality			technological power, utilization of energy, etc.

however, their increasing influence, and the action of techniques derived from the sciences, emphasize the dynamic character of scientific activity and authorize the hypothesis of a modification of data. How is this intervention possible?

In principle, and outside any given language situation, thought remains passive. In other words, the mind simply registers the characteristics of data. To change them would amount to falsifying them. Nevertheless, as soon as the perception of experience is translated into a language by the agency of a text, it sets down and starts off a living thought for which this text is only a point of support. Once the text is established, thought will use it as a springboard for new explorations. Thus, even if we maintain the hypothesis of immutable data, we must admit that thought is transformed, and by being transformed brings about a modification, not only of the impersonal self, which is the pure and transparent form of the incidence of data on consciousness, but necessarily of the datum itself, in its capacity as "signifié."

Thus the scientific text appears as a kind of pretext, a provisional fixation bound to be transcended by a thought impatient to supplant it with another one. Like a historical action, the scientific text constitutes a

unique event. It takes place only once and so disappears into the past. In such a situation, reality is always present to thought, but—as “signifié”—is subject to the progressive modifications of the thought that constantly observes it. Even if we emphasize the term “signifié,” this restriction does not change anything in fact, since any known and knowable reality is part, as such, of the game of scientific languages, and since reality provides thought with data, it is thus indirectly committed to an irreversible historical process.

From these preliminaries to the conclusion that scientific thought can modify reality profoundly, there is only one step. It exercises this power by remaining transparent, like an open form without a substance of its own. Its power is attained at the price of a terrifying and precarious expenditure of observations, measurements, calculations, and finally, texts. In this game, thought is condemned to hide itself, even to ignore itself, without any other evidence of itself than its efficaciousness.

LITERARY CREATION AND LANGUAGE

If it is true that the light of the world borrows its rays from the light of the spirit, it is not surprising that the spirit should try to manifest itself in some form other than invisibility. Just as the sciences transcend a static language situation by increasing, the arts and literatures justify themselves by expression, understood as a manifestation of the deep self implied and excluded by language. Quite unlike the sciences' attempt to overcome solitude, artistic activity aims at disclosing an opaque and luminous self through a transparent reality. Such an activity, which demands the presence of the subject and the eclipse of the object, leads to a continuous projection of the subject on itself and to a permanent state of self-awareness: that is, the subject, which cannot be wiped out in the consciousness of the object, must find a means of surviving all its modifications in order to manifest itself, not only in historical texts, but in lasting works, whose presence increases with time instead of diminishing. Like the scientific self, the artistic self transcends mortality, but without becoming bodiless and transparent: on the contrary, it assumes life at its softest and most delicate, and projects it, animated by its breath, on the signs which have the power to call it forth. (See fig. 6.)

The life thus breathed into literary texts reanimates them whenever they are read, and prolongs their survival as long as such texts call up a contemporary presence projected on the past. The text may become archaic: it will survive, not as a single historical event but as the expression of its own posterity.

Its survival depends on its ability to reflect over a period of time, beyond its author's life, an increasing number of present identities:

Comment se garderaient les profondes pensées
 Sans rassembler leurs feux dans ton diamant pur
 Qui conserve si bien leurs splendeurs condensées?

(Vigny, *La Maison du Berger*)

The splidity and duration of the text contrasts with the inconsistent multiplicity of the reflections it casts off. The worst of hoaxes would consist in presenting the text as a message from another world or another spirit. If another spirit were to come to meet us, we would have three possibilities of establishing communication with it:

- a) learning his language
- b) teaching him to speak our language
- c) inventing a new language common to men and other spirits.

But who can claim to converse in a nonhuman language? If a nonhuman spirit existed, his language would threaten our identity, for where is our identity if not in the culture which persists throughout our transformations?

A rudimentary language leaves room for the voices of nature. For a long time priests brandished their god like a threat, then the non-human spirit was imprisoned in sacred books. But in all his works man speaks with his own voices. Nothing testifies more accurately to human weakness than the strong and lasting work. Nothing testifies more authentically to the spirit than the profoundly human work.

SUBJECTIVITY AND LANGUAGE

There is no external or internal world in itself. What a language designates is, so to speak, in front of this language, and the person uttering the words is situated behind them, even if he is referring to himself. Since there is always a language between reality and the man who, in order to get in touch with reality, has no other tool than this language, absolute transparency of the person or his communion with reality seems to be impossible.¹¹

Paradoxically, language as an instrument of knowledge confuses whoever uses it to the degree that reality, in order to become an object of knowledge, appears on a screen made to man's measure, where the signs are drawn originally by man. Reality does not appear of itself, but in the last resort, according to human intentions. Pure objectivity is reduced to an illusion, and no science is in a position to do away with subjectivity,

¹¹The experience of mystic union cannot be communicated, even though it passes, *before* its consummation, through the route of images, beyond which the mystic passes into the Night (according to St. John of the Cross.)

which always takes the lead. The use of a language, even a scientific language, thus entails the presence of a subject on the very spot where convention would like to wipe it out: in the very heart of reality.

Theoretically, thought may be defined as that which conceives an object and remains separate from it. But this is a hypothesis which there is absolutely no possibility of verifying. In fact thought, because it depends on a language, always reappears inside reality. In other words, the prime originality (intentionality), the active subject behind any language, is rediscovered in every object of thought: the world is external, not with relation to the subject, but with relation to language.

The objective self is obviously only a very tiny part of the person who seeks to express himself, just as the rational element emerges on the surface of the profoundly irrational. Once more, we are not trying to posit either the existence of the self or of a reality in itself: languages will always intervene to prevent us from reaching the pure self, and will do so all the more effectively because language, composed of signs that refer to things, rejects thought in its shadow, behind the light it perceives. To continue the figure of speech, the shadow is but an absence of light and a sign by which light is recognized. This leads us back to our original statement, according to which, by virtue of the opacity of language, being, unknowable in itself, is transformed into an appearance, and thought, unfathomable in itself, becomes the animating agent of appearance. If this is true, then thought is thrown backward into the shadow, only to participate more successfully in the game of appearances. Though it is but a shadow, thought alone is able to signify, and in a way to betray, unexpressed reality. As a result, reality, whatever it may be, is subject to the action of thought, and thought, not satisfied with being negatively manifested, as in the case of the sciences, tends to manifest itself directly and positively in the same way that acts manifest a will to do something. Language as a means of expression aims, contrary to language as a means of understanding, at manifesting the subject *in the heart of* appearance.¹²

This subject will always be implied and will not show itself unadorned or in its immediacy: it is condemned to keeping in touch and keeping active. Such a creative attitude is reserved for the most exceptional minds when they are brought into a state of incandescence.

TRANSCENDENCE AND LANGUAGE

Though success is rare in this field, to express oneself is not enough; one must also assume reality. A third fundamental condition for artistic

¹²"La poétique nous donne d'innombrables exemples où la nature et les choses figurent ce qui est le propre d'un être vivant: les champs *se revêtent* de fleurs, ou de neige, la lune *rêve* dans l'étang, les chemins *s'en vont* et *s'évadent* vers l'inconnu." (Jean-Paul Gonsseth, *Théâtre de Veille et Théâtre de Songe*, Editions du Griffon, Neuchâtel, 1950, p. 34.)

expression is the ability to express, beyond the personal and historical self of the author, the living and present self of posterity. Generally speaking, it is a matter of creating a communicable and concretely universal self, in other words a living culture, without which language does not manifest anything beyond the presence of an isolated individual.

Language is not existential but relational. Thought finds its completion—and its salvation from death—only in language. In itself existential, thought does not enter any set of relationships as such; it lives and dies as pure availability without necessity. It is language that makes thought operational and meaningful, to the point of destroying any given reality to the benefit of a created reality.

Thus, brought to a level of transcendence in relation to existence, language escapes from the human condition. Indeed, to establish the fact of death and to complain about the human condition is already a liberation, for it creates a relational situation with respect to death and the human condition. The consciousness of death (as of any given reality) constitutes a virtual transcendence of death (as a datum), which becomes effective only on the relational level. The whole effort of expression, in order to rescue one's identity from death, consists in suppressing the existential character of thought by raising it to the relational level.

The errors of a romantic interpretation, according to which the man behind the work is the only thing that matters, are well known: if Shakespeare's work still speaks to us in our time, it is certainly not because it is the expression of a little-known individual. The survival of a dramatic work depends on its ability to depersonalize a conflict in order to give it so exemplary and impersonal a character that, in tragedy, the contemplation of the worst of fates is a source of joy. While taking part in the action, the spectators are situated at such an immunizing distance that they are simultaneously present within the characters with whom they identify themselves and, outside the actual performance, within the invisible character invented and justified by it.

THE SELF IN THE NOVEL

The novelist too expresses himself through his characters. For example, Cervantes identifies himself more or less with the Don Quixote who makes fine speeches on the comparison between the careers of the warrior and the man of letters. But in the end he condemns his character with an irony that contains an element of love. He commits himself to his character, but keeps him at arm's length; he ridicules him but keeps in store for him a stock of mental health, which is recovered at the end. The madman is not the whole person, it is only the individual who plays a role, but the whole game, though it is serious because it ends in death, does not

commit the real self, at least no more than the game engages the person of the player.

Finally, communication can be established only through one indivisible person, of which all identities partake. Both in its historical and spiritual development, literature manifests this deep self.

Ordinary language already manifests this indestructible self common to all. To find it we need not resort to theological notions or abstract concepts. We may deny the existence of God, but we cannot wipe out his name. Many words refer to this underlying self, which is not manifested as such except through the mediation of the act of faith which sustains any great work.

The hypothesis of a deep self arising from a creative act must constantly be called into question. If that self were immutable and did not need to be put to the test, there would be one final and single literature, and it would be sacred. In fact, orthodoxy is forbidden to any open spirit by virtue of the dynamic relationship between thought and language. This ungraspable deep self appears only in the form of a substitute or of a language which proceeds from a distinct identity, from an obfuscating subjectivity, since every word, every image, and every character proceed from the person who conceives them, and since there is no word so simple nor any character so lowly that it does not commit the person who chooses them—if it is true that he chooses ready-made words or already existing models—(in reality his intervention goes much further).

Things get worse as soon as we speak of objectivity. How can one remain objective if everything happens inside us, if the text is a mere pretext, the essentials of which are not in words but in the effect produced on and by these words? Who does not identify himself with his impressions, feelings, opinions, ideas? Arbitrariness lies in wait for anyone who tries to evaluate a word, for to judge its effect on oneself is not enough. One must be sufficiently master of oneself not to trust the first impression, and above all, it is important to relate one's own reactions to those of the critics who, in the course of centuries, have evaluated the work in question.

The history of criticism offers limited warrants of objectivity, but we must not forget that critical errors are often as illuminating as well-established opinions, and that final judgments, however much admiration there may be in them, kill works of art.

THE LYRICAL SELF AND COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

In lyrical poetry, where the absence of a dramatic or narrative context seems to exclude the participation of any character other than the author himself, the relationship between thought and language obeys the same

rules as in the theater and the novel. Here too language acts like a revealing screen on which we look in vain for the direct expression of a particular man's feelings. Rather, what we find there is a poetic personality masked by images. The feelings of the artist differ radically from those of the man. The poetic image plays here the role of dramatic action with all its episodes and characters: it is the cipher of which the poet and his hearers or readers are the explanation. To what plenitude and with what economical means poetry elevates the supremely responsible being when its images become transcendental! Then the universe seems to be haunted by a single person and animated by his thought.¹³

In this privileged situation, the limits imposed by language to the expression of thought are transgressed by the poet without his having to step outside the magic circle where language surrounds his thought, as well as the world to which his thought is exercised. By drawing the circle which closes any well-constructed poem, he voluntarily reduces himself to a central and initial point,¹⁴ a zero point of intersection of all diameters, to the insubstantial and original point of universal reference from which the dividers of language, by mapping out the outline of everything, cause being to appear as a manifestation of a consciousness infinitely transcending the referential self.¹⁵

If geometrical analogy is not enough, theology will perhaps provide a comparison. In this case, the reduction of the self to a point of departure would correspond to humility, and the action of drawing the circle to that of the Word, which reveals God through the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

¹³"Pour être authentiquement soi et pour pouvoir dire originellement 'moi', il faut que le créateur aboutisse à l'universel, contrairement à son attente." (Max Loreau, *ibid.*, p. 301.)

¹⁴"Tout l'univers concevable de Michaux se situe de la sorte dans un registre intermédiaire. Aux extrêmes se trouvent le moi et le monde réels pratiques, le poète se tient entre eux: il s'établit à un niveau susceptible de rapprocher des données aussi disparates, de leur conférer homogénéité de telle sorte qu'entre elles une relation devienne possible." (*Ibid.*, p. 304.)

¹⁵Here we agree with Max Loreau's conclusion: "En ce sens, pour autant qu'il ait fonction de ranimer sans cesse l'étincelle première de pensée afin de la maintenir vive, l'art est un perpétuel retour au geste d'où sort ce qui est: il ne cesse d'entretenir la destruction du langage, des concepts, des formes au profit de leur apparaître." (*Ibid.*, p. 347.)

¹⁶The new translation of the Bible, which is literal and makes a deliberate attempt to strip the language of its sacred character, shows the extent to which religion depends on the solemn language of those who practise it: "The most blatant recent treasons have been the documents under discussion, especially the New Bible, where, with enlightened self-righteousness, the translators have betrayed the God of their fathers in full confidence that they were increasing his chances of survival."

Literature too, and most especially the theater, depend on the maintenance of noble language: "If Shakespeare can be kept alive in reading and in performance, as he can, so can the other great achievement which connects us with his age, the language of the Bible." (Jan Robinson, "Religious English," in *The Cambridge Quarterly*, Autumn 1967, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 337.)

Finally, the loss of a religious language leads to the loss of identity and soul: "A people that loses its religious language, its power to share a serious sense of life, has gone far towards losing its identity, or, if one dare say it, its soul." (*Ibid.*, p. 307.)

Though this analogy is inadequate, it at least defines poetic transcendence as a revelation, through being, of a consciousness transcending the original self. Language becomes the Word, but it is the self that is transcended, since it is no longer the geometrical center of a circle, language, which, by closing on itself calls forth the outline and presence of a being—a being which is not absolute but is linked with thought, not abstract but living and continuing to live through the creative act.

LANGUAGE AS A SOURCE OF LIFE AND THOUGHT

If psychology distinguishes several concentric or superimposed identities, the poetic self, by transcending the poet, is divided into two entities, one remaining fixed in the center of a fixed text, the other liberated from the poet who has produced it, continuing to live as long as posterity is incarnated in it.

This abnegation of the self, in favor of whoever goes over the text and recognizes his passage there, imposes an asceticism on the poet: he avoids abstraction and the ready-made in order to grasp in his sensual images the condensed reflections of thousands of sensations or impressions, and in order to join by his rhythmical progress the real and living presence he calls forth. The blood circulating in the poetic work makes it so consubstantial with life that man can lay claim in his works to the right of being heard:

S'il est vrai qu'au Jardin sacré des Ecritures,
Le fils de l'homme ait dit ce qu'on voit rapporté;
Muet, aveugle et sourd au cri des créatures,
Si le Ciel nous laissa comme un monde avorté,
Le juste opposera le dédain à l'absence
Et ne répondra plus qu'à un froid silence
Au silence éternel de la Divinité.

(Vigny, "Le Silence")

Thus conditioned by language, which has become a line of separation—or rather, confrontation—between consciousness and appearance, thought renounces the cry of the isolated self in order to become attuned to the universe, by silence if necessary—a peculiarly eloquent silence, for it is already an answer and a challenge; but it is still an active and influential silence, whose efficacy is illustrated by our own era; for history, man's true answer, gives witness to the scientific adventure, and reveals the inner world of the great works where the silent spirit makes its way through the hubbub of the centuries and the sounding brass of doctrines.

PART TWO

**LANGUAGE,
TIME AND
FREEDOM**



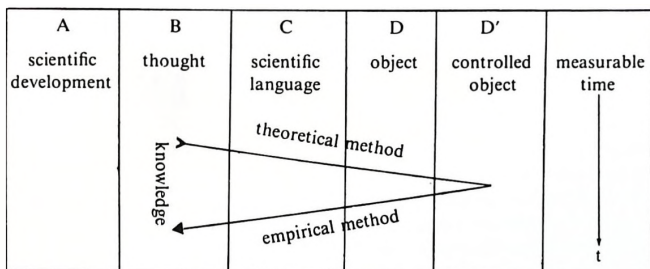
CHAPTER 3

Diachronic Cultural Movements

So far we have studied the mutual interaction of language and thought and the opposed directions in which the screen of language can be crossed. Now we must ascertain how this transcendence develops in time and what its limits are.

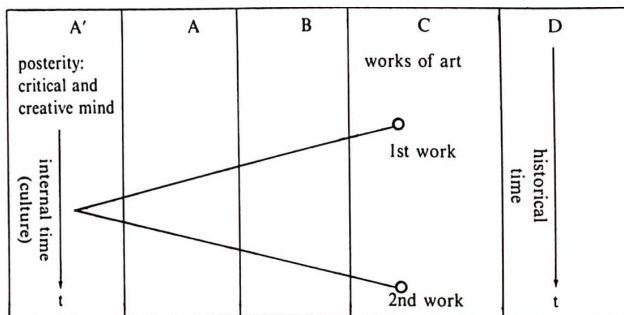
The first condition is that every movement proceeding from a given language situation is built upon an exchange between the antithetic levels of a language situation. As we have distinguished two fundamental language situations, the scientific one and the literary or artistic one, we obtain the following typical movements:

Figure 7



In the case of scientific language, it is thought and its object which constitute the fundamental antithesis. In the case of poetic language, it is the work and its posterity that are placed in opposition. In the context of each of these two fundamental language situations, movement is represented by a shift on the vertical axis *t*. It transforms the static (horizontal) situation as established in "Language and Thought" into a dynamic

Figure 8



development where a new factor and a new dimension, *t*, intervene. This resolves the confrontation BDD' or CA' into a progressive exchange and implies a motive power. In other words, we pass from the examination of a synchronic situation to the representation of a diachronic movement.

Before we proceed to the construction of more precise models, it is important to define the three new elements: progressive exchange, time, and motive power.

LANGUAGE

The diachronic movement thus obtained resolves a static language situation, whose fundamental characteristic is confrontation, by the agency of language, of thought with its object, into a dynamic development, the foundation of which becomes an exchange.

In the case of scientific language, the exchange takes place, if we base these considerations on "Language and Thought," between thought and the control which it exerts over its object. In the case of artistic language, the exchange takes place between the work and consciousness A', the latter being transcendental with respect to A.

Therefore the exchange consists either in a modification of the object and in a corresponding modification of thought, or in the creation of a new work which will cause a modification of consciousness A'. At first sight this statement seems to be vague and fruitless, but before we make it more precise we must be well aware of its consequences.

A very simple example will put us on the right track. Michèle's mother has just fastened a bracelet around her daughter's wrist. Before the mother can check the clasp, Michèle (3 years old) runs off, proud of her new ornament. At that moment the mother remembers that she had not

heard the click of the clasp and concludes that the bracelet will open and that the little girl, who is incapable of fastening it herself, will lose it. And so she does. This little incident involves Michèle's mother in two fundamental language situations, whose development can be described as follows:

1. (As soon as the little girl runs away) "You'll lose your bracelet, come back!" the mother exclaims, repeating the gesture of fastening the clasp.
2. "Your pretty bracelet!"

The first exclamation contains the germ of a scientific language situation. It is founded on the operation of reason (interpretation of the sign of warning constituted by the absence of a click, deduction and prediction of consequences, intervention, recovery of the object, etc.). This series of operations is accomplished in several phases. It is applied to an object represented by signs and consists in replacing problematic signs by verified signs through action on the object. There is reciprocity, therefore there is an exchange. In such a language situation the object of the exchange matters very little. It remains neutral and without intrinsic value. Its only function is to appear to thought as a fact or phenomenon, but in every other aspect it is indifferent. As such, it conforms to the game of thought and is subjected to a logic. The situation creates an indifferent, determined world.

The second exclamation is as indispensable as the first, and contains the germ of an artistic language situation. It aims at communicating a notion of value. The object called "bracelet" is qualified in such a way as to awaken feelings and cannot be reduced to useful signs. Abstracted from its external functions, it is, so to speak, internalized in the child's world. It refers only to the child's consciousness, for which it becomes a valuable object.

In the first exclamation the word "bracelet," as a simple sign or concept exteriorizing the object, assumes a syntactic function which confers practical value upon it. In the second, the same word is used to name the object, and thus to transpose it into the signifying or meaningful universe of words where, in the extreme case, there is no object beyond its sign, but where words, taking the place of objects, identify themselves with states of consciousness, of which they constitute the coinage or means of exchange and of expression.

In order to illustrate the divergence between the two languages, one might start from the point of view of the present cultural situation and try to account for the explosion of imagery which marks the end of the millennium: Surrealism, Dadaism, nonfigurative art, abstract and informal painting, existentialism, *nouveau roman*, theater of the absurd,

etc.: confronted by the flood of images issuing from the mass media, the creative spirit refuses to connect itself with the external world and to be enslaved by mechanical and technical developments. The time has come when art must detach itself from external reality to devote itself to its appropriate task, which consists in revealing, affirming, and salvaging the life of the spirit. Artistic experience is not simply lived experience: an artistic language, whether musical, pictorial or poetic, relieves life of its existential weight to raise it to the relational level. Mere existence no more plays the game of expression than external reality is concerned with the language game of description. Mere existence is the hopeless struggle between individuals, races, and societies. But on the relational level, pure consciousness counterbalances, opposes, opens to, and is confronted by reality. In this interaction of the opposed levels of any language situation, the higher levels of consciousness must keep the initiative. The case of literary realism may illustrate this point: because it is marked by a weakening of controlled expression in favor of formless description, it tends to recede in proportion as scientific effectiveness is established.

Another contemporary aspect: we become conscious of the mobility of images and of the dangers of brainwashing and manipulation. When ideology rages in a technocratic society, it is because images are used as a means of alienation.

Another danger: stifling confinement. As dangerous as the specialists are the pure esthetes, the members of coteries, parties, exclusive groups, or simply people vain enough to claim sole possession of truth and beauty, or ambitious enough to impose their own ways or views. Not to mention those who are a danger for themselves as well as for others, the conjurors and acrobats who go through their bag of tricks to show that they are on speaking terms with the Absolute,¹ all those who divide or close our consciousness.

Necessarily opposed to reality by language, consciousness is contemporary with reality, and if a concept or a work has a lasting duration, the corresponding consciousness will also last. Another interdependence: the universe will be rational if examined by reason, absurd if judged from the point of view of individual existence, beautiful if seen with the imagination, etc. Language creates an external and docile world with descriptive means, and an internal world of values with expressive means. In both cases, the exchange results from an effort, as if time had to be pushed by man.

¹Jean-Claude Renard, *L'VII*, No. 19, p. 47: "Il advient ainsi que cette force, qui élève la poésie contre la fatalité, les profanations et la mort, inquiète parfois assez l'homme pour l'approfondir jusqu'à Dieu." For the opposite view, see Robert Sabatier, *ibid.*, p. 57: "Se mettre à nu, se dépouiller de ses vains artifices, reste un privilège de prince. . . ."

In conclusion, the difference between the static model of transcendence presented in "Language and Thought" and the preceding sketch depends on the two contrasting movements of exchange, language being used in both cases as the means of exchange. In the case of scientific languages, the texts can be substituted indefinitely (C coming between B and D) while in the cases of artistic languages, the works exchange successive aspects of their images according to their perspective as seen from the opposite pole (A').

The object of science is not given as such, but becomes what the effort of thought makes it appear to be, by means of concepts. As to transcendental consciousness situated in "Language and Thought," at the other extreme of the static model, it exerts itself as a mobile focus of perspective on the works which, step by step, constitute culture—for there can be only one universal culture.

TIME

The foregoing makes it clear that language redeems time which, without the exchange of which we have spoken, would flow in vain, either in the metamorphoses of reality or the flux of existences.

Science proceeds by means of experiment and deduction from an acquired and verifiable stage to a stage to be adopted and verified. Hence the long and strenuous teaching process required by science, repeated for each individual, always to be begun again and lost with each individual who dies, transmitted by texts and painfully established, modified, replaced and learned. The arts and literature, on the other hand, proceed from a gradual but total overwhelming and blinding discovery of the identity beyond each individual. For instance, the reader or spectator of a work of art proceeds step by step toward the discovery of a unique totality, so that time, instead of flowing, so to speak, within the bounds of an abstract language, flows in the unique identity called forth by images.

Thus we see that in itself time is neither external nor internal. It is language which objectifies or conceptualizes it or, as in the case of literature, concentrates it in gradually revealed images. Thus, the rhythmical time of music, the nonfigurative and naked image of abstract painting,² and the other types of chiefly expressive images, which refer primarily to internal data, best illustrate the dynamism of expression. It acts directly upon consciousness, independently of any understanding or

²In the kind of painting which represents no more than a broken, rough surface, (that of Tapes, for example), or the mass of the colors used, it is the very material employed by the artist which becomes an image (and not its sign). But even if the image is constituted by the material of the work, we must learn to read the artist's intention and attitude. As an image, the material represents only a means of expression, and in this respect, it also contains duration.

knowledge, expressing consciousness by means of a language which, by communicating itself and lending itself to interpretation step by step, thus reflecting itself in a multitude of individual and differentiated consciences (in science the individual is neutral), rescues existential time.

Existential and nontransposed time does not interest us here. Even if we adopt the distinction proposed by Bergson between the spatial and measurable time of intelligence, and the internal and rhythmic time of intuition, we have not yet crossed the decisive threshold of its implication in a language situation, as F. Gonseth does in *Le Problème du Temps*.

That time can be measured or internalized seems to us to be of quite secondary importance with respect to the primary fact of its conceptualization or expression, in other words of its being transposed in the two divergent language situations. We must admit that this transposition changes nothing with regard to the problem of time and does not allow us to progress in the understanding or intuition of a real time which flows as if we did not exist. It only seems to pass, and we have no other witness than that of scientific or artistic languages and, as a consequence, no certainty. Now, in all its forms, language links us with time. Even the most spatial of arts, sculpture, painting and architecture, many of whose works can be seen at one glance, have their rhythm and expression, therefore they constitute an act where man and *his* time are linked.

In this study we intend to confine ourselves deliberately to the consideration of transposed time. We might repeat the famous sentence by Molière: "Le temps ne fait rien à l'affaire." A sonnet is not judged by the time needed for its writing.

If we have no certainty, it is because the truth of science and the truth of art are in a continuous state of flux. They not merely are, but make themselves, and it is only in them, in their movement, that time takes on meaning; otherwise it merely passes.

On the axis of time, *t*, we therefore do not represent real phenomena or existences but alternate and infinitely intertwined exchanges, whose movements project on the chronological line *t* only as isolated landmarks without any significance of their own. The meaning of what we may call cultural time is to be found in the exchanges themselves.

At first sight it seems difficult to apply our model to the chronological development of science and art. Chronological tables with dates and titles are mere compilations, but there has never been an attempt to represent the movement of cultural exchanges.

The undertaking does not seem entirely futile, for the excellent reason that science and art, even though they refer at all points of their development to the totality of a universal culture, proceed step by step;

therefore it should be possible to analyze their exchanges and to build models of them. Despite this constant reference to their totality, one is surprised at the isolation of research workers and creative writers. By way of an example, we need only allude to the highly personal character of certain discoveries, to the narrowness of literary milieus, coteries, vogues, fashionable circles, and juries, to the apathy or indifference of the persons who have access to basic instruction. Whole periods seem to be entirely lacking in creative spirit.

It seems even more surprising that, despite the fragility of the lines of exchange, their movements seem capable of continuity, and that threads are woven, for instance, between the professional writers of the nineteenth century, romantic gentlemen, the bourgeoisie of the "grand siècle" and Greek philosophers of antiquity! What is more, this continuity is diachronically dynamic, for it may reappear after having apparently been broken and tend during each period toward the kind of universality where past, present and future become meaningful only in the unity of human history. One may ask oneself, in this respect, whether such a continuity does not hold time at bay in an analogous way to the transmission of genetic information, whether there may be a kind of unconscious culture which survives individual death. However inadequate this analogy may be, cultural time as we are going to try and represent it, acts as a vital force in the struggle against the nothingness of unperceived and unconceived reality.

FREEDOM

Any perceived reality is subject to the rules of language, and hence to a kind of necessity, causality or meaning, which is not inherent to reality but results from a language situation.

Paradoxically, the consciousness of being and the feeling of nothingness are linked, not inextricably, but under the effect of the dialectics (in the sense of "play of relationships") resulting from the fundamental antithesis: time, existence—life, culture. The consciousness of being, as we have seen, results from the application of thought to language (language refers to something). This something, as soon as it enters the language game, allows itself to be determined or is ordered according to a logic, while remaining outside the game, even if this game excludes any sort of freedom.

This same language, because it is inseparable from thought, implies an identity which imposes a meaning and determines reality while remaining free (here the concept of openness acquires its full meaning) and internal. But there are several degrees of interiority. For instance, if thought becomes conscious of itself and hence creates an identity external to itself,

it may be said that we have an interiority inside interiority, an interiority in the second degree. We see, therefore, that thought has the power to determine itself, and to remain free and open with respect to itself. We must emphasize this duality and draw its consequences: if it is possible to formulate rules of psychological behavior, of logic and grammar, in the same way as geometrical demonstrations and laws of physics, the author of these rules is independent of the person subject to them. The so-called laws of science are, like those of jurisprudence, made by a legislative power (consciousness as a force): they are events and form part of history.

The consciousness of being is therefore the consciousness of that which, by virtue of the language applied to it, is projected and rejected from the feeling and thinking subject. The latter is capable in his turn of feeling like a nonbeing, a free and open nothingness. Consciousness of an external being always implies, as the body implies its shadow, a consciousness of internal nothingness, of potentiality and of the insufficiency of the being. A radical dissatisfaction is at work in the man who opens himself to being. But it is not enough to open oneself to what is given; one must determine what it is and give it a meaning. In any work there remains a substance which is not given, in any problem there remains a datum which is not stated, and this datum will always be an internal and subjective factor or a motivation. In consequence, no scientific conception and no work of art can be sufficient and wholly satisfactory if the power which has produced them does not surpass them as well, for it exerts itself against their abolition in time and in favor of their inscription in history, a struggle in which there is no respite.

The radical dissatisfaction of which I have spoken refers not only to the active consciousness but also to its object, since consciousness cannot be satisfied with taking itself as a datum. It must create new objects, just as any work produces new materials. Consciousness has an irrepressible need to express itself, and cannot do so only through the exercise of the rational faculties, which allow it to appear in a negative way: imagination is necessary.

The double insufficiency of the datum in itself and of consciousness "at rest," to which we must add the sting of death and of nothingness, incite man to create, so as to keep his limitations and the discontinuity of time at bay. The achievements of many civilizations were necessary for man to distinguish his two chief resources, reason and imagination, and it is likely that several civilizations will be necessary for him to learn how to create a balance between them: we know the kind of unbalance to which a predominantly technical civilization can lead.

Creation does not mean refusing to see actual reality, with its limitations and its suffering. Rather, it means being conscious of reality to

the point of wanting to abolish it. Now, reality can be denied only by transcending it, either by reason, which links a reality to a logic, or by the imagination, which liberates reality from *some* contingency. Reason reduces it to a system of relationship in which everything, however limited it may be, refers to anything else, is distinctly conceived and rationally analyzed. The imagination transposes reality and expresses the self in images of transposed reality.

Does the preceding distinction imply that the imagination proceeds arbitrarily? The study of any work of great value shows that this is not so, and that an internal necessity, which is far from incompatible with creative freedom, presides over the development of works of the imagination. If in the scientific work the mind is subjected to a rigorous discipline, it is not the mind which is imprisoned by logic: the mind remains open, available and free in its movements. The work of imagination, on the other hand, though it may disregard chronological order and cross the threshold of irrationality, nonetheless participates in a necessary unity which is the mark of a free and all-encompassing personality.

Thus we see the point where the common efforts of the sciences and of the arts converge: toward the expression of a creative freedom which transposes reality in order to establish its unity. Whether we like it or not, by the very fact that both are languages, the unity of reality is to be found in two opposite directions (see "Language and Thought"), either because it is sought in the meaning of things or because it is expressed by the modalities of "nonbeing." In both cases discontinuity is abolished and the limitations of space-time are transcended. In both cases the flux of time is replaced by history, where all things hold together: and finally, it is a cultural reality freely created by man.

Neither a wisdom, nor an ethic, nor a global knowledge of life, nor a rule of conduct can be founded on science, since science permits us to know only the external aspects of things, those given as objects by language, and since objects are present to a neutral and indifferent, rather than active, consciousness.

It is useless to object here that "an all-embracing knowledge of life," "a wisdom," or a "rule of conduct" are vague terms, testifying to the ignorance of those who use them, and leave the field open for arbitrariness, while scientific knowledge, when extended to psychological, social, political and economic facts, as well as to ethics and law, confines itself to reducing them, like the so-called natural phenomena, to a perfectly logical, formal and determined play of relationships. Even if scientific knowledge were to involve—as we would like it to—all possible fields, it is nonetheless determined by its own intentions, including the intention of manipulating human, social, political, and economic factors.

The simple act of placing human life in a language situation divides it into two aspects, the objective one and the subjective one; the latter remains irreducible. Now the self or subject of science is neutral and indifferent: it cannot use the images which serve for self-expression, therefore its permanence—and hence its freedom—lies not in its objects but in its context: concepts and symbols. Scientific progress as well as artistic expression proceed from this freedom.

There always remains something which is not fully manifested by the knowledge of objects and by technical action on these objects. This something, whatever name it may be given—spirit, soul, or internal motivation—cannot be satisfied with manifesting itself as an indifferent law. If this were so, it would be completely powerless, since it would modify reality in the eyes of an immutably indifferent and paralyzed consciousness. If knowledge and the resulting transformation of science are to have meaning, they must proceed from an active consciousness. Their very principle must be freely determined, independently of the interplay of logical relationships in which thought intervenes. Otherwise the fundamental freedom of the subject and the purely internal moral force which it opposes to the necessary and fateful development of events cannot be explained. Though they may not make any changes in the rational order of reality, which remains unaffected by knowledge, language confers upon them the ability to counterbalance the object by the subject and the concept by the image.

If the man of science does not feel responsible toward his objects, his knowledge is nonetheless *actively* open, whereas the artist, though fully responsible for himself, draws, in order to express himself, on the very source of any activity: none of the two cultural activities can do without the other, unless the lack of balance so often observed since the explosion of the first atomic bomb takes place.

The confrontation between object and subject, between concept and image, leads to the ultimate relationship between the world and the self, not in the sense that the self perceives the world passively, but in the sense that the self subjects the world to the test of language, for it is language that makes the world what it seems: hostile, external, ungraspable, implacable; a cosmic indifference that engulfs all life.³ Destroyed in its very heart by time and individual death, life finds in imagination a testimony of active and conscious duration in the face of the indifferent, insensitive, and passive world. The creative freedom of the poetic, musical, or pictorial imagination, when all is said and done, is a freedom wrested from fate and from an otherwise unbearable human condition,

³In the chapter entitled "Language and Thought" it is in this sense that we employ the expression "cosmic consciousness."

for the imagination has two sides: the slavery of its object and the fantasy of its subjects.

It may well be argued that this is a purely verbal satisfaction; but being is given by language and in the end depends on the author, the source, the origin of language, human consciousness, man.

In conclusion, the movement indicated by arrows on both the preceding figures does not represent calculable and predictable forces, and still less physical values. We have attempted—though some may consider it foolish—to represent values on a spatial diagram, and thus to indicate their direction, sense, or meaning. We are quite aware that a movement whose principle is freedom cannot be explained *more geometrico* unless it is expressed in a metaphorical manner. The figures which follow will be used as conceptual images which so far need not be verified.

CHAPTER 4

Science and Imagination

We shall try to construct a diagram on the preceding reflections. Our aim is to examine the conditions for the MOVEMENT of emancipation through language, in other words, the conditions for transcending in time the separation caused by language itself.

In order to study this movement, we must start from the two fundamental language situations and examine the way in which this movement develops within the natural limits of these situations.

In order to represent scientific procedure in the simplest way, we represent scientific language as a kind of screen on which the information received from objective reality is formalized, then transformed in practical applications. The task of thought consists in reducing received information to abstract data and ordering these data into relationships: thought intervenes only to impose a logical pattern.

This movement of passing from D to D' represents the movement of technical expansion. Thought is not changed by this movement: it remains virtual and acts only through the agency of its tools, languages and techniques.

Artistic language reflects, in the form of images, virtually extended to D, subjective impressions reflected in their turn in the individual con-

Figure 9

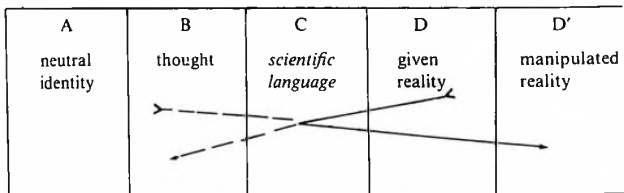
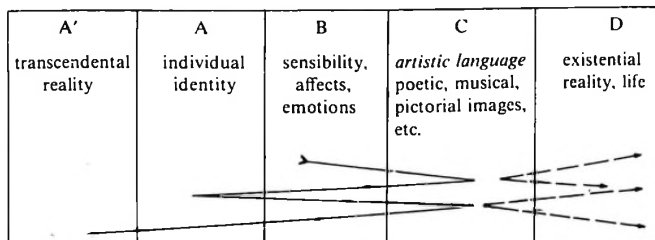


Figure 10

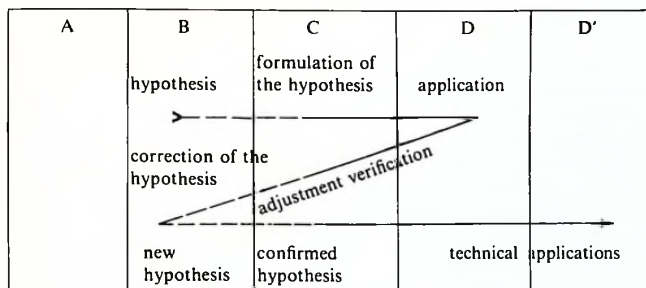


sciousness (the author and, to the degree that the author communicates his impressions, the reader or spectator). By reflecting himself on the text which virtually confronts reality, the author creates the consciousness of consciousness, or transcendental consciousness, incarnated not in a person or in a concept but in a work. Thus we understand why a work of art can simultaneously belong to its time and continue an autonomous life beyond its time. Artistic language is more than a screen. It creates an identity whose existence is in some sort assumed by the work, the text, the language, and whose duration is identical to that of the work.

DISCOVERY

The movement of scientific discovery seems relatively simple and corresponds to the procedure of the four phases conceived by Ferdinand Gonseth: projection, application, verification and adjustment of the hypothesis:

Figure 11



This figure permits us to distinguish the following facts:

1. Unlike artistic language, scientific language does not consist of an autonomous text with a life of its own; it is subject to revision and evolves towards a more and more precise, penetrating, or all-encompassing formulation.
2. The text is provisional, while the reality which confirms or contradicts it is supposed to remain invariable. Thought remains constantly adequate to the immutable object and is not affected by its own movement: its only responsibility consists in corresponding as closely as possible (through a simple, abstract, and precise formula) to its "immovable" object (reduced to its constant relationships). Thought gradually penetrates its object, reduces the unexplored areas, and opens itself to new viewpoints. Thus causality is imposed by the level C on the level D, and logic is imposed by the level B on the level C.
3. Thus, being capable of progress, rational thought, and with it its practical and technical applications, achieves a progressive manipulation of the objects which respond to rational formulation. This manipulation escapes in part from the control of rational thought, which restricts itself to making manipulation possible.
4. The preceding figure sets the following limits to scientific progress:
 - a) Such progress is indefinite, endless, for if the universe were to be entirely and exhaustively explored,
 - 1) progress would stop and precision would grow stale;
 - 2) thought, ceasing to work creatively, would stop;
 - 3) the total formula is impossible for it would have to include its author.¹
 - b) A world where everything would be quantitative, rational and verifiable could not be lived in, for there would be no place for man.

Despite the rational norms to which thought is subjected, it is thought that takes the initiative over knowledge, for a new scientific hypothesis cannot arise from a purely rational idea; some kind of intuition or motivation is always ascribed to a discovery. Cultural and social evolution plays an important part, and the development of science depends not only on environment and circumstances, but also on man himself.

Whereas technology is considered as distinct from pure science, the fundamental motivation of research involves a responsibility and should not be dictated by material interests.

Finally, it must be admitted that the incessant activity of thought influences not only its object but also the very image of the object, the

¹ We do not refute in advance the universal formula of a physicist and philosopher like Heisenberg: we just state that any formula involves the use of a language—mathematical or not—and as such can never be final.

very concept of rationality, and the modalities of rational perception. This means not only that each historical period has a different notion of rationality and consequently of the structure and nature of the world depending on that rationality, but we may even go so far as to say that the nature of the world (not in itself, as pre-existent to any understanding, such as it does not concern knowledge, but as subject to understanding) is modified by the work of thought.

To verify this hypothesis, it would be sufficient to compare the notion of matter prevalent in nineteenth-century atomic physics to the much more subtle and complex twentieth-century theories with their components of undulatory and quantum, relativity, and magnetic field theories. The nineteenth century generally believed in a corpuscular universe suspended in ether and satisfied the need for simplification (which is already evident in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*). The world really seemed to behave as if the hypothesis had been decisively controlled; besides, society and economy seemed to give their blessing to the predominance of matter over spirit; even the novelists at the high tide of naturalism deliberately failed to imagine anything beyond the impact of the material and blind forces of nature.

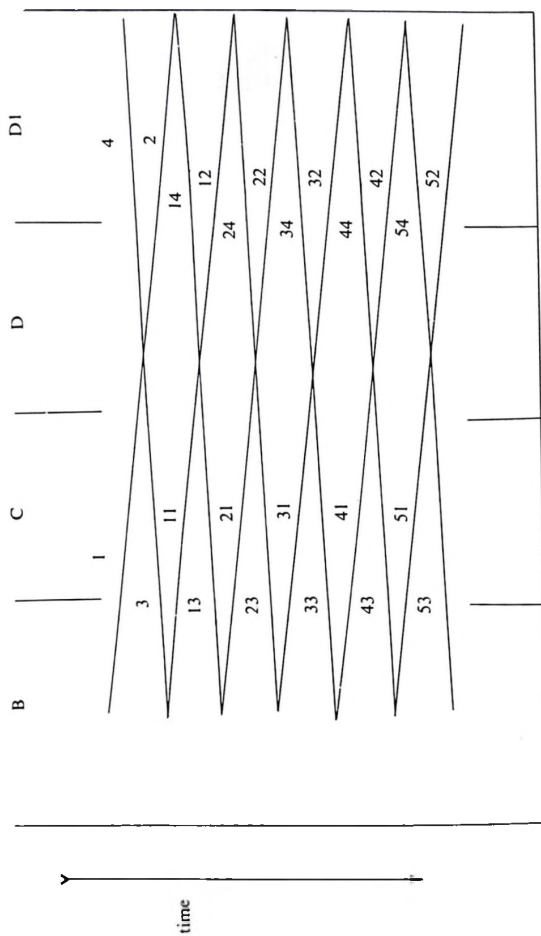
Can we conclude that the work of thought modifies its object? Yes, otherwise the object would be exhaustible and totally knowable and this would have the effect of halting thought's progress, blurring the precision of formulas, and arresting the operation of thought. Each new step of science modifies its structure and its object and makes one more step necessary. This dynamism is characterized by an irreversible movement which runs parallel to time in that it always suppresses the past, and in that it always progresses toward a future which rejects the actual present in the discarded past,² as if to both justify and avenge, by generating a continuous progress, the implacable flux of time and the passage of individuals from nothingness to existence by accident, then back to nothingness forever. Scientific thought progresses along the following dialectical lines:

- 1) openness to the object and formulation of the hypothesis;
- 2) application of the hypothesis to the object;
- 3) modification of the hypothesis;
- 4) application of the modified hypothesis.

This movement can be anticipated to a certain degree, but remains unpredictable in the long run, for, in order to predict what the next hypothesis will be, the whole work of application and modification must be done, and it may fill a whole era. In reality this dialectic is only an

²See F. Gonseth, *Le Problème du Temps*.

Figure 12



analytical, discontinuous way of representing continuous processes or real movements. What is essential is to recognize that thought itself is implied in this movement and that its object cannot be finally and decisively grasped (there is no such thing as static objectivity). The only constant feature of this movement remains the fact of confrontation, the object of thought always being the antithesis of thought itself and therefore remaining material. Whatever meaning the word "material" may have, it is always linked with the concept of matter: both are engaged in a language situation. Finally, "matter" is the product of rational thought. In order to find the final and universal formula, we would have to stop time and create an omniscient and eternal man who would incarnate that formula.³

We would do well, when describing the history of science, not to see in it the progression of thought toward the knowledge of an invariable object. We must conclude that the task of thought gives rise to modifications undergone by the thinking subject, as well as by the reality to which he chooses to open himself and that, without being the cause of time, this task is the motivation if not the justification for time's incessant and irreversible development, insofar as it is perceived by means of a rational language. The task of rational thought is creative in this sense.

MEANING

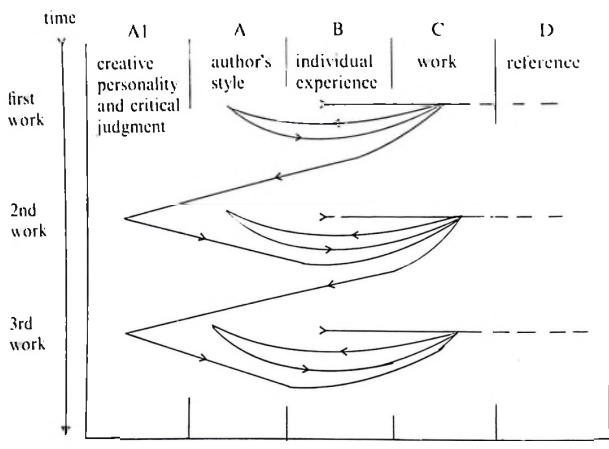
Rational languages are not the only ones. Beside ordinary language, which allows for an elementary but confused perception of time, consisting mainly of grammatical categories (as is shown by Genseth), artistic languages and in particular literary languages develop in a completely different historical context, for in their function as expressive languages they cannot aim at rationally knowing objects reduced to relationships, but at expressing the subject by means of images.

Man can never bathe twice in the same river, said Heraclitus. The classical and very French notion of unvarying human nature is no longer fashionable, and Molière's Harpagon is no more final than Shylock.

The mode of perception of artistic languages differs by virtue of its opposite direction. Artistic works generate one another, not by virtue of the confrontation between thought and its object, but by recreating works from their starting point of individual sensibility (in B): (see Figure 13) The figure below represents the simplest case of a series of works in a chronological sequence. This kind of figuration can be applied at will to other cases: interruption of a tradition, readoption of an interrupted

³See note 1, p. 40.

Figure 13



tradition, interaction of several traditions, fusion of several traditions into one, division of one tradition into several, etc.

What matters, for the moment, is to observe the way words generate one another and ensure their continuity by becoming linked to a tradition. The first observation to be made concerns the dual origin of any work. On the one hand each work in a series issues from a unique experience (starting point on level B), autonomous and isolated in time. On the other hand, each work is linked in A' with one of the works in the series and indirectly with the whole series.

One may even consider the extreme case of a single and unique work constituting its own tradition (the Bible, or the Koran, for example) but it would have to be conceived of as ending on the A' level, thus following a horizontal line representing the duration of its own tradition.

One might also represent a series of works both directly and indirectly linked (at A') by lines joining all the points in the columns C and A' (for instance, the more or less contemporary works of a school like the Pléiade in France or the Pre-Raphaelites in England).

The examination of these possible cases would not modify in the least the fundamental fact of the dual origin of the work of art. Let us consider each of these two points of departure separately.

- I. All the points of departure in column B represent the perceptive foundation and the uniqueness of the works. Thus, it may be said of any work that it constitutes a unique experience, at once necessary (or irreplaceable) and autonomous (or original), that is, born of individual perception. Whether the occasion for the work is furnished by particular circumstances or is common to other works does not in any way alter this statement.

The word "necessary" must be clearly defined. It definitely does not mean that the creation of a work is inevitable or even subject to some kind of internal or external causality. Nor does it mean that the work is useful or corresponds to a given need (in that case only the so-called literature of consumption would be necessary!) A work is necessary in itself, whatever its function inside a tradition may be, to the degree that it contains, represents, accomplishes, and constitutes something that can be found in no other work.

It is here that the distinction between the work of art and the scientific work appears most clearly. Scientific novelty, indeed cannot be conceived in isolation. It marks the pursuit of a path open to new developments. Besides, this novelty does not last and is inevitably eclipsed by the one which follows it. Artistic novelty is absolutely and permanently new. No one will ever be able to supplant the *Odyssey* or to imitate Debussy to the point of surpassing his work by refining his stylistic tricks. In this sense, a scientific work is necessary to others, while the work of art is necessary insofar as no other work can supplant it and insofar as, without it, what it contains, represents, accomplishes and constitutes would not exist. Paradoxically, one might even go so far as to say that it is necessary insofar as it is gratuitous, a fact that upsets so many publishers and booksellers inclined to follow the fashion and to mistrust anything that comes out of nothing. How many works are refused because of their gratuitousness!

Nor does "necessary," in the preceding context, mean "explicable," for such an interpretation would raise cries of anguish from the esthetes who believe in the myth of mysterious creation! In the context of our study, however, based as it is on an analytical method, it is important to explain even the inexplicable. This leads us to another paradox: a work is necessary to the degree that it is free. We may even turn this deliberate paradox around by saying that a work is born under conditions proper to itself alone. It cannot be either repeated or reproduced, although it can be communicated.

The inexplicable nature of art can be explained in theory as well as in practice. Only what escapes analysis is inexplicable. The elements of style

and the thematic contents of a classical work can be analyzed, but—this is the conclusion of any *explication de texte*—when everything is explained, the essentials remain. What Jean-Claude Piguet⁴ calls the problem of totality eludes esthetic analysis: the mysterious fact that the author, who is the only one able to explain the original mystery, orders a certain number of disorderly perceptions. The principle of this order cannot lie elsewhere than in the personality of the author, a personality made unique and original by rescuing reality from the nothingness of that which is left unexpressed.

The role of the indivisible and incommunicable person of the author is suggested in the preceding figures by the passage from C to A, and is reflected by the passage from A to C. Individual sensibility is nothing without its reflection (in A) in the person of the author. This dual progression is not necessary in science, which can do without individual idiosyncrasies, stylistic refinement, originality of expression, without whatever makes the uniqueness and totality of the work of art.

Hurrying forward in order to transcend itself, abolishing itself in order to be more precise, scientific language does not require of its authors the gift of irreplaceable style or the expression of an inalienable personality.

2. The autonomy of the work of art does not exclude its belonging to a more complex whole of movements, schools, groups, studios, coteries, styles, and genres, which can all be included in the idea of tradition. Despite its unique, incommunicable, and total character (since, born of individual perception, it inseparably reflects the person of the author), the work, because it is also language, manages to communicate not only its informational contents but also some aspects of its totality and its uniqueness, however untransmissible they may be in themselves.

In order to account for the communication of what is incommunicable, two hypotheses are needed: either the person of the author, by reflecting himself in his own work, allows the spectator, the listener, or the reader to create an identical character, or the work itself projects a transcendental identity which goes beyond the person of the author to join those projected by other works. We shall now try to show why these two hypotheses seem to be necessary and complementary.

The person of the author, reflected in his own work, is distinct from the real or existential person. If it is marked by uniqueness and originality, this is because it is reflected in the work which calls it forth and expresses it (the movements C A and A C). Thus committed to a language

⁴ *Qu'est-ce que l'Esthétique*. Studia Philosophica, Vol. XXVIII, p. 158.

situation aiming at revealing the subject rather than at knowing the object, this person appears in the form of images rather than in abstract concepts, and these images are perceptible in their plenitude and totality.⁵ Thus transposed into concrete images, this person can reflect himself indefinitely and hence call forth, in another consciousness, an identical image.

Besides, the image of this person is not yet constituted at the time when it is expressed in the work (movement B C); in this case, the work which calls it forth by reflecting it in the consciousness of the author $\times$ (movement C A $\times$ C) and in the consciousness of the reader (movement C A C) creates an image as unique and untransmissible as the one of the author. But are they identical? It is impossible to admit that the reader may consider the work as his; therefore, we must suppose that he creates an image of the image, an aspect which covers an elusive identity. The adequacy of his interpretation cannot be founded upon an identity which he will never reach, but upon a convergence and a superposition of the images α (his own), y and z (those of other readers, contemporary or not). In short, the work is gradually and successively communicated by an exchange of interpretations.

But how is a convergence of interpretations possible? It seems unthinkable as long as the work is reflected in individual consciousness. How could individual consciousnesses identify themselves with that of the author when they have not expended creative effort? Under these conditions, the only means of achieving a convergence and concordance of interpretations seems to consist in comparing another work, equally creative and connected with the preceding one, which may serve as a point of reference. If both works are really connected, it will be possible to obtain an approximate but converging interpretation by superimposing the interpretations of both works.

But in what does the connection consist? Is it sufficient for two works to belong to the same period, to the same genre, or to use the same means of expression, or must we believe in "families" of minds?

For two different and unique works to be connected in what is called a tradition, they must be reflected in a mirror which is external both to their authors and their readers (A'). If what both authors reflect in their work is their individual person, if what the readers see in it is the image of that person, there may and must exist a consciousness which transcends that of these persons and these images, even though it be invisible and at a further remove from the works in question. This consciousness is active,

⁵See R. Tschumi, *A Philosophy of Literature*, Linden Press, London, and Dufour Editions, Philadelphia, 1961, particularly pp. 176-184.

nonetheless, since it is the only explanation for the movement from one work to the other.

Our second hypothesis, whatever the difficulty of verifying it, is made indispensable by the fact that the first hypothesis implies a separate point of departure for each work. We are thus induced to link different works by lines between columns C and A'.

This reasoning leads us to formulate a new hypothesis as to the movement of the creative spirit, for it cannot be conceived of as meaningless; that is, as developing in a succession of time without direction or purpose, a young tradition replacing an aging tradition without bringing anything more or anything better, rendering culture unimportant and in the end vain.

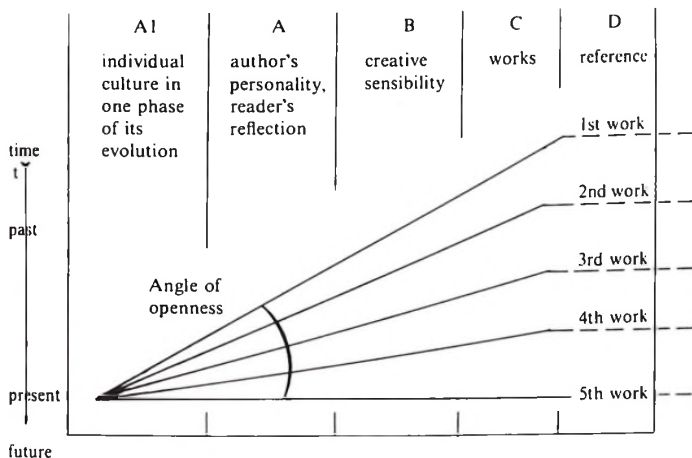
The same problem must be formulated quite differently in the sciences where progress in knowledge as well as in the precision and the range of language leaves no room for doubt.

In an "artistic" language situation, the only direction which can give meaning to the temporal movement of creation resides, not in a multiplication of the images reflected in A, but in a progressive opening of consciousness shared by several works; in other words, of the intentional consciousness A 1, the only one that can give meaning to the otherwise discontinuous (born in B) movement of creation. Now, the angle of openness of consciousness (in A') can open in two directions: either in the direction of the future, by reflecting itself in the works as they appear and thus participating in the creative effort, or in the direction of the past, by going back in time in order to reflect itself in the works of the past and cause them to appear in a new perspective, which confers a new life upon them.

Let us now try to represent this movement of opening. In order to simplify our figure, we suppose that consciousness A' is motionless (in reality it also moves, and is never purely individual, but we are taking the case of the total culture of an individual at a given time): as shown in Figure 14.

The double movement with time and against time, which confers both coherence and duration upon a culture, has the result of guiding the works of the past toward a common point which is always present. It is, therefore, transcendental consciousness which gives meaning to the creative effort. But our hypotheses also entail that this meaning cannot be decisively fixed and that the interpretation of artistic works depends on the perspectives and angles in which they appear. Interpretations are further modified as long as new works are created, so that the initiative is left to creative sensibility, and the appearance of new, original works is wholly justified.

Figure 14



The figure also shows that the more closely works are linked, the more they profit from the essential characteristic of all culture, universality. The width of the angle and the multiplicity of the works linked in the same perspective—especially in the case of a culture which transcends a single individual—tend to just such a convergence of the network of interpretations that one may justifiably speak of universality. A culture is justified by its openness and by its richness, and two cultures cannot exist simultaneously or successively. Any omission or exclusion sooner or later brings about the dissolution of the culture and deprives it of the meaning it had patiently acquired.

This universal consciousness is not cosmic in the sense of being “diffused in the universe” or “in accordance with the universe.” It is constituted independently of objective knowledge (in a scientific language situation) but it goes without saying that the crossing of creative activities in B entails a cross-fertilization of both of the great language situations. A period where two cultures are glimpsed, as is presently feared, is a period without culture, for there can be only one universal culture.

In the two preceding figures the levels of the successive works are horizontally prolonged in D and D' to suggest their incidence on reality and on the control of reality, but this influence does not seem to be

exerted by virtue of a continuous dialectical movement: unlike the concept, the image, which is the artistic mode of expression,⁶ does not aim at acting on reality (which is also the object of creative sensibility, but on the consciousness in which the image is reflected).

Our study can be summed up so far as containing a hypothetical reconstruction of language situations and of their movements. Like any model or hypothesis, it must now be put to the test of experience.

⁶See *A Philosophy of Literature*, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-95, "Literature and Science."

PART THREE

**STRUCTURES AND
OUTLINES OF
CULTURE**

CHAPTER 5

Conditions for a Methodical Theory of Culture

THE STARTING POINT

From what precedes, the following points may be considered as acquired:

a) The distinction between what is "inside" or "implied" and what is "referred to" or "explicit," between subject and object, or between mind and matter, is not philosophical but linguistic in origin.

In attacking what they called Cartesian dualism, some British empiricists, among them David Hume and more recently Gilbert Ryle (in *The Concept of Mind*) have fallen into a contrary excess: that of making no distinction at all between mind and body or matter, not even the one necessarily resulting from the use of language. Descartes may well be "wrong" in positing two entities, but how do we know that he is right or wrong if not by using a language that makes such a distinction? Gilbert Ryle's belief that "the hallowed contrast between Mind and Matter will be dissipated" (*The Concept of Mind*, London, Hutchinson, 1955, p. 22) rests on the illusion of empirically destroying an assumption made by language itself: "My destructive purpose is to show that a family of radical category-mistakes is the source of the double-life theory. The representation of a person as a ghost mysteriously ensconced in a machine derives from this argument." (*Ibid.*, p. 12)

Similarly, Jean-Paul Sartre's ontology is wholly built upon existential distinctions with a purely linguistic basis; for instance, his fundamental distinction between "le pour-soi" and "l'en-soi," between the interrogative and the given being, may be reduced to the distinction between what language implies (the active thought) and what it refers to (objects, data). The following quotation illustrates this point: "Ainsi, le pour-soi est un absolu 'unselbstständig,' ce que nous avons appelé un absolu non substantiel. Sa réalité est purement *interrogative*. S'il peut poser des

questions, c'est que lui-même est toujours *en question*; son être n'est jamais *donné*, mais *interrogé*, puisqu'il est toujours séparé de lui-même par le néant de l'altérité; le pour-soi est toujours en suspens parce que son être est un perpétuel sursis. S'il pouvait jamais le rejoindre, l'altérité disparaîtrait du même coup et, avec elle, les possibles, la connaissance, le monde."¹

In spite of the disparity between Ryle's and Sartre's philosophies, both have in common a transposition or projection of a purely linguistic evidence on the level of ontology. What can be said to be or to exist does not necessarily exist in itself, but the temptation is too strong for so many philosophers who cross this threshold, not recognizing that they are involved in a language situation which comprises not only thought and its object, but also the formulation of thought and its references.

This criticism, however, does not mean that these philosophers are "wrong," but that their statements about what and how things are should be understood as statements about what and how things are said to be.

b) Both the scientific or descriptive and the artistic or expressive trends aim at bridging the gap between "the inside" and "the outside," or the subject and the object, by establishing a relationship between them. The very nature of art or science is based on a particular relationship between thought and its object in a particular language situation.

c) In all its manifestations, verbal or nonverbal, language appears as an active force, that is, as a factor in which thought and its affects² are active. Such a human factor does not act on any type of "objective" or measurable time, but develops in relational time, that is, in a time where past, present and future are meaningful and always related to human activity. The principle of this activity is not to be found in any mechanical, logical or deterministic causality, but in the human ability to express feelings, make decisions,³ judge and discover, in other words to transpose experience into a language situation.

d) This free activity cannot be examined in any scientific way, but must be studied in its manifestations, principally in the works of art, literature

¹ *L'Être et le Néant*, Paris, NRF, 1948, p. 713.

² In this context, "thought" is understood in its widest implications, as the origin of any motion in consciousness, and corresponds to the following definition by Descartes: "Par le mot de penser j'entends tout ce qui se fait en nous de telle sorte que nous l'apercevons immédiatement par nous-mêmes; c'est pourquoi non seulement entendre, vouloir, imaginer, mais aussi sentir, est la même chose ici que penser." (*Les Principes de la Philosophie*, première partie, Paris, Vrin, 1963, p. 56.)

³ A second quotation from Descartes may serve to establish that this ability need not be demonstrated: "Au reste, il est si évident que nous avons une volonté libre, qui peut donner son consentement ou ne pas le donner, quand bon lui semble, que cela peut être compté pour une de nos plus communes notions." (*Ibid.*, p. 80). The title of this article (39) is significant: "Que la liberté de notre volonté se connaît sans preuve, par la seule expérience que nous en avons."

and science, where the authors may be said to freely move the wheel of history so as to merge any chronological spot of time into a meaningful, life-giving present involving an equally meaningful past and an equally meaningful future. The understanding of great minds and great works, though it does not lead, like the knowledge of objects, to any rational or empirical investigation of causes and effects and cannot be quantified, remains the only means of examining why and to what purpose life is meaningful and worth living, why any living individual matters, and how relational (as opposed to measurable or existential) time moves in a historical context.

e) The progress of science and the organic development of art and literature do not explain in themselves, but serve to illustrate and understand the way relational time moves. This movement is all the more endless because it requires an endless interpretation made possible by the exchange between the various levels of a given language situation. Even a culture of the highest degree of universality must remain creative because it is submitted to an endless process of interpretation.

f) Concrete illustrations of a cultural movement may consist of diachronic studies of authors situated on the same line of a tradition. In that case the differences between texts of various periods may yield information on a diachronic creative development, but the unpredictability of this development should always be kept in mind, for there is no way of causally explaining the differences except by a creative act of understanding and interpreting.

As this type of study touches the fields of comparative literature and of literary history, the reader should be reminded that no one has ever been able to explain in terms of causal relationships the influence of one major author on another or the history of ideas and the emergence of great works. Contrary to minor, time-bound works, which may lend themselves to causal explanations, major timeless works⁴ must be understood in terms of creative freedom, by an act of re-creation and interpretation.

DEFINING THE METHOD

We are not at all trying to establish a new classification of sciences. We are not concerned, for instance, with the impact of ecology, with its urgent problems (air and water pollution, disappearance of animal species, etc.) on present-day biology, nor can we contribute to more strictly distinguishing biochemistry from genetic information. These are the problems which present day research must solve, and we had better leave them to the competent scientists.

⁴For this distinction between time-bound and timeless works, see *A Philosophy of Literature*.

We are not trying either to reorder the categories of literary criticism. We simply start from the fact that both science and literature or the descriptive and expressive activities, the social sciences and the humanities, to which their respective metalanguages must be added, all use certain types of language and consequently can be described in terms of various typical language situations with their own movements, functions, aims and limits. Our method is neither purely intuitive nor purely descriptive. Our only claim to reliability consists in endeavoring to keep in mind all linguistic levels simultaneously, thus remaining in a position to recognize their interaction and to propose, as a final result, a very tentative sketch of their consistency or unity, a theory of culture. If such unity does not result from or is not presupposed to an investigation of this kind, then no theory of culture is ever possible.

NEW DIMENSIONS AND THEIR ADEQUATE FIGURATION

So far we have studied some of the static and dynamic elements of culture and concluded that culture must always be considered as one undivided whole. This conclusion is even the very basis and condition of a theory of culture: as a result, we must go on studying further elements of culture on the basis of the complete language situation, each element existing in relation to all the others, as situated on a particular level with a particular dynamic function.

Our investigation is not merely descriptive. It may, in certain respects, have a normative value. The essential condition of consistency or unity can be used for normative purposes, for example when any of the levels is switched off, short-circuited or considered separately, not organically.

It is obvious, however, that some important elements have been left out for the sake of a progressive method. The whole structure of interactions between the upper A levels and the lower D levels requires further precision: all the varieties and modalities of observation, perception and expression must find their adequate representation on the corresponding levels.

Another important omission is derived from our endeavor to represent only the actual classifications of culture, abstracting them from their potential or virtual forces, and isolating them from their background.

The first of these two main omissions can be compensated by our empirical study of a certain number of language situations and by placing them on the corresponding levels of the figures used so far. The second element, of potentiality and background, cannot be represented, unless we add another dimension to our figures. The only dimension which may be added to our bi-dimensional geometrical figures is volume: we must

assume that the various levels of a language situation are in reality not surfaces, but volumes, that each line drawn on them may cover a surface, and that underlying lines of potentiality or background may be drawn anywhere inside the volume.

This new dimension of volume could be conveniently used to represent the background elements, on, across, along and inside each level, but it cannot represent the dynamic elements of potentiality and actual or virtual potency unless we either violate the rules of geometry or have recourse to mathematical symbols, which would inevitably prove inadequate in the long run, since we are looking for a mode of representation which takes account, in all its stages, of a totality of functions, interactions, movements, attitudes and actions. We shall obviate this difficulty by inventing, for our purposes, an imaginary geometry in which the same figure, (point, line, surface or volume) can be simultaneously or successively, actually or potentially present on any spot of time, time being represented by the perpendicular extension of the language situations.

The unconventionality of this mode of representation should all the less be objected to because philosophy has always been aware of the difficulty of representing a continuous movement (Zeno's problem) and because, for teaching purposes, movement is actually and efficiently represented by the displacement of a volume along a line. The discrepancy of our method resides in the fact that we do not deal with an objectively or spatially measurable time and with constantly unchanged volumes. Our volumes can be together in the same place and simultaneously in different places, in different sizes and forms! This apparent contradiction disappears if we take our figures for what they are, that is, for symbols with a rational and objective basis, thus respecting the law of noncontradiction, but ultimately aiming at formulating an unresolved problem and at representing an object which involves its own subject.

The fact, in particular, that creative freedom is one of the factors of culture, and consequently of any complete language situation, makes it difficult if not impossible to conceive a fully rational mode of representation. If this factor could be eliminated, even the subject at any of the A levels could be rationally conceived and submitted to a deterministic process. This would mean, for example, that psychology and the social sciences could become exact sciences, this would also mean that human beings can be manipulated at will or that they always behave in a predictable way.

This factor, however, cannot be eliminated, and as long as it remains the problem is unsolved, which does not mean that it cannot be formulated. In reality, both difficulties resulting from the aims of our

endeavor, the difficulty of formulating an insoluble problem and the difficulty of representing an object which involves its own subject, can be reduced to a common denominator: creative freedom as a factor.

THE PROBLEM OF TOTALITY

As we have seen, creative freedom constitutes a problem, not so much because its motivation is irreducible to logic, but because its consequences are unpredictable. It is impossible to foresee its effect and thus to build a science of culture, although many cultural factors are indeed predictable.

As we have emphasized, however, this problem is inherent in, not external to our field of investigation and, as such, must find some kind of an internal solution in its very formulation. We must come to terms with it and by doing so we necessarily solve it, not in itself, but in view of our practical purposes.

We have already approached an internal solution when we tried to consider vast cultural time sequences and to represent the angle of openness. The fact which lies behind such considerations is the extreme complexity of any type of cultural development, so complex and involved indeed that it may be said to be paradoxically simple in that it does not contain an intricate set, a multiplicity, but constitutes one indivisible and qualitative whole. For instance, we had to state that the only way of understanding the creative impulse behind a work of literature or a scientific discovery would consist, if it were wholly possible, in making the same effort as the writer or the scientist, with the same results. This would suppose that the one who tries to understand possesses the same background as the writer or scientist and is situated at the same point of the cultural development in question. As a result, the effort of fully understanding could be achieved only at the risk of negating the uniqueness of the work or the discovery.

We must therefore account for two contrary facts: the existence of totalities or irreducible qualitative wholes, and their penetration or duplication. Both facts can be represented by our imaginary geometry, which allows for an interpenetration of volumes and thus incites the imagination to step from the perception of infinite complexity to the comprehension of qualitative totality.

THE OBJECTIVE VALIDITY OF THE THEORY

Received geometry, which is used for the purpose of describing objects, can allow only for the intersection of lines and surfaces. Our imaginary geometry does not aim at the description of objects or, rather, its objects contain their subjects and what it describes is a set of relationships without any substance beyond them: they are their own substance, for we

have from the start assumed that culture is made of relationships. However imaginary it may be, our geometry does not represent abstractions of existing shapes and bodies in space: it stands directly for the cultural reality or substance or manifestation itself, but it goes without saying that geometrical figures can provide only the general frame and internal structure of any language situation. We can go very far interpreting, for instance, musical sounds in terms of vibrations with the corresponding graphic representation: the equipment of language laboratories, too, shows how far sounds can be visually transcribed and acoustically transmitted.

There remains, however, one decisive restriction to the possibilities of graphic, visual or acoustic figuration: they are objective and, as such, reject the corresponding subject in the background, however directly implied or even expressed it may be. In other words, any graphic (geometrical), visual, acoustic or phonetic figuration is caught in a language situation: it constitutes the representation, within an objective language situation, of a subjective language situation. We refer to something which refers to something. For this kind of double indirectness, structuralist criticism (for example Roland Barthes) uses the hybrid but practical word of "metalanguage."

We shall adopt it for our purposes, but not without defining it and characterizing the properties and functions of what it stands for. For once, a metalanguage is itself a language and as such refers to something, while implying and expressing a subject thus related to the objective something. This implies that any metalanguage reduces another language to the function of an object, even if—as in our case, where the object is related to a great variety of subjects—the object of the metalanguage is not in itself purely objective. This raises the problem of the objective validity of language.

The simplest case of objective validity seems to be offered by an exact and purely objective science like physics, where the object may rightly be termed an object, whatever definition we may give to the term "object," ontological, practical or linguistic: the person of the physicist remains neutral and whatever he may do and however far he may intervene in the preparation of his object, never in the least impairs his function of observer. The case is apparently simple because, between the neutral observer, who may be replaced by any other observer, who would adopt the same attitude and verify the same facts, on the one hand, and the pure object which is submitted to a consistent, rational and mathematical investigation on the other hand, there lie, on the B and C levels, a thought and its appropriate language, but nothing else: there is no screen between the observer and what he observes, except for an adequate and transparent formulation. The language of physics seems to be concerned

exclusively with its object and it is difficult to find any other language which is so exclusively descriptive, though we have seen that the subject is far from remaining passive, even in this case.

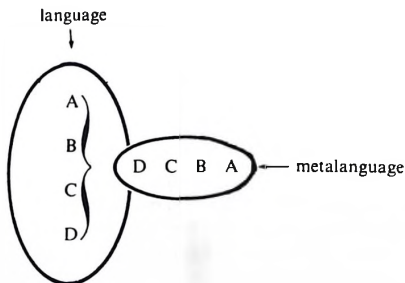
The case of the metalanguage of physics—the history or the theory of physics—is much less simple, for the object of the metalanguage of physics is the language of physics. For the purpose of transforming the language of physics into an object, its transparency must become opaque and its subjective components must become objective. This shows once more how far the distinction between the object and the subject depends on linguistic purposes, but this entails additional far-reaching consequences: there are many grades and modalities of objective validity.

In the simplest case, that of physics, the maximum grade of validity is reached when the language is a mere substitute for the facts of observation, but this applies also to the more complicated case of the metalanguage of physics—with this fundamental difference, that the transparent language of physics becomes an object, and that the level of transparency is displaced from the D level, through the C and B levels, to the A levels. This phenomenon cannot be classified in the same category as transcending solitude by science toward deeper D levels and by the expressive arts toward higher A levels. There remains one possibility of accounting for this new phenomenon: by using the third dimension of volume. This will enable us to situate, in the background of each scientific description or artistic expression, but on different levels, corresponding metalanguages.

METALANGUAGES

This figure illustrates the perpendicular position of a metalanguage with respect to its corresponding language. It also shows that the object of any

Figure 15



metalanguage, or its own D level, comprises the whole language situation of the corresponding language, including its creative and unpredictable elements. As a result, the degree of objective validity of any metalanguage is always necessarily inferior to that of its corresponding language, for it has to objectify nonobjectifiable and to determine unpredictable components.

Thus we see why the case of the metalanguage of physics is only apparently less complicated than, for instance, the metalanguages of the expressive arts: like them, it includes the unobjectifiable and unpredictable components, the existence of which has been traced with a high degree of reliability (see *Language, Time and Freedom*) in the history of physics and of science in general.

No metalanguage whatsoever may ever hope to become quite rational and objective. This is one of the rigorous norms of our theory of culture, and we should not forget to apply it in the first place to our very theme, the theory of culture itself, the object of which comprises, in the background of the D level, a great variety of unobjectifiable and unpredictable components.

The degree of indirectness and of objective validity of the metalanguages does not entail any lack of adequacy or even reliability, but implies a real danger of arbitrariness if the metalanguages are mistaken for languages. We may argue as to whether such languages as those of psychology, history, and sociology are wholly or partly metalanguages. We shall try, in the continuation, to mark the difference between languages and metalanguages with as much precision as possible and to define their respective modalities. For the present, we are concerned with the necessity of drawing the consequences from the fact that the theory of culture definitely falls into the category of metalanguage.

It follows from this fact that no other metalanguage is more exposed to the danger of arbitrariness than the theory of culture, for no other metalanguage can possibly have to objectify and to determine, in the metalinguistic field, such a variety of nonobjectifiable and nonverifiable factors in the field of culture.

To resist the temptation of arbitrariness, two complementary ways are open:

1. An extension of the rational and objective mode of investigation to its furthest limits, so as to ensure the highest possible degree of logical rigor and descriptive precision;
2. An imaginative understanding of the creative process, that is, of the unobjectifiable and unpredictable components of culture.

The theory of culture, as a metalanguage, must cross the barriers of

national and ideological prejudice in such fields as history, politics and social science and replace these barriers, as we are trying to do, by an open view which allows for no other conditions and limitations than those imposed by the inherent and logical interaction of all the cultural components.

This open and rational investigation, however, is of no avail if it is not sustained, at every step, by an imaginative understanding of the unobjectifiable and unpredictable components of culture. By imaginative understanding we mean that the creative effort, as a factor at work at all the stages and in all the fields of cultural development, cannot be either neglected or objectively seen, but must be approached with a willingness and an ability not only to enjoy, criticize and evaluate the achievements of the creative effort, but also to make the corresponding effort of imagination in an attempt at recreating the cultural values created by this effort.

Thus we see why a purely rational theory of culture is of no avail: without the help of the imagination, the unobjectifiable and unpredictable components of culture cannot be accounted for and even less represented. The object of the theory of culture—as of any metalanguage, including the metalanguage of physics—is in no case a pure object like the object of physics, and consequently must be approached both rationally and imaginatively. The delicate balance and the richness of resources needed for this approach are so rare that most metalinguists are satisfied with either the dryness and incompleteness of the determinist or the arbitrariness and prejudice of the opinionated. The field of metalanguage is stained with the sin of pride and crowded with amateurs who do not care either to verify their opinions—thus despising the empirical and rational approach—or to make any creative effort, thus despising the motivations and the ends of their object.

Our modest contribution aims at sketching the rough outlines of cultural structures while accounting for their organic functions and aims. A condition of this endeavor is the awareness of its precise limits. The preceding figure shows exactly where our metalanguage ceases to be adequate and objectively valid. As the theory of culture covers the whole language situation of culture statically represented in our figure, it ceases to be adequate when it overflows, bypasses or partly covers it; it ceases to be objectively valid when it fails to account for its wholeness in an imaginative way.

The theory of culture must be both descriptive and expressive, and must both rationally analyze and achieve an imaginative synthesis, but it works under severe conditions and strict limitations: its descriptive analysis can grasp the dynamic but not the creative components of culture, and its imaginative synthesis can account for the fictitious, not for

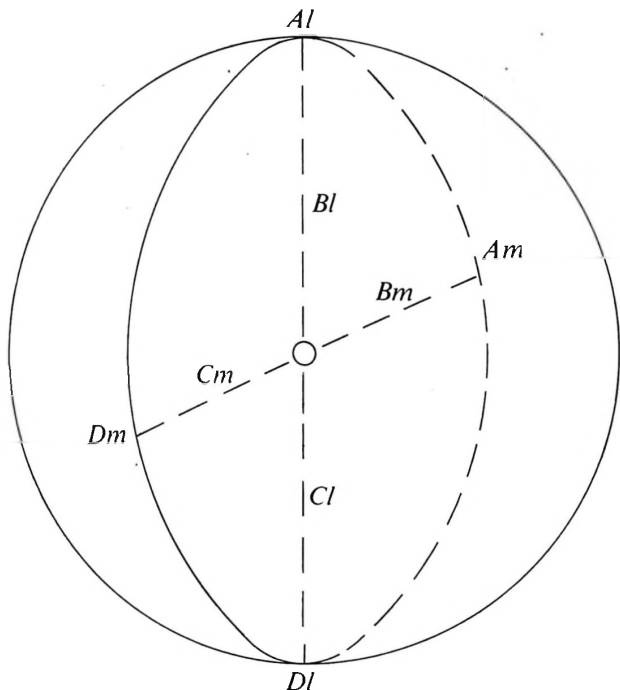
the realistic components of culture. This amounts to saying that the theory of culture refers to an unpredictable object and depends on the future developments of its object. Any metalanguage must respect its corresponding language and may modify or influence it only in so far as it is conceived, in its wholeness, as an object, but, as the corresponding language autonomously effects its own modifications and exerts its own influence, the creative possibilities of any metalanguage are correspondingly weakened and restricted. Respect for culture and modesty must replace, in our field, the sin of pride. Our figure shows that it is rather the language that contains and precedes or generates its corresponding metalanguage than vice versa. Another way of formulating the same rule: metalanguages can take no initiative of their own which does not allow for the autonomous development of their corresponding languages. No metalanguage can determine its corresponding language and consequently can ever hope to have access to the status of an exact science, and no metalanguage can ever hope to be used as a means for self-expression, for it can provide only a concept of self-expression, not self-expression itself. Hence the descriptive limitations of sociology, psychology, political science and the corresponding scientific fallacies, hence the expressive limitations of criticism (including historical and comparative criticism), art history and artistic taste, with the corresponding errors of judgment and understanding.

Because it is based on two main language situations, the scientific or descriptive one and the artistic or expressive one, the present theory of culture confesses its own limitations: its foundation is historical rather than rational, for it takes account, from the start, of the increasing divergence, since the sixteenth century approximately (a divergence originating in Greek culture), between scientific and artistic languages. The theory of culture as a metalanguage must take account of the development of the corresponding languages.

If one whole language situation constitutes the object of a metalanguage which may be said to be contained in and generated by its object, then a metalanguage may be said to operate in the reversed order of its corresponding language. A metalanguage is conversely complementary to the corresponding language in such a way that the creative components of the language are reciprocal with the objective components of the metalanguage, and vice versa. This reversed reciprocity can be represented by the following figure: (see Figure 16)

In figure 16, we have simply reported the levels of the metalanguage inside a sphere containing all language levels, those of the language 1 following a vertical succession on a circular surface and those of the metalanguage *m* following a horizontal succession from the front of the sphere, *Dm*, (representing the visible object including all language

Figure 16



situations of *l*) to the hidden back of the sphere, *Am*, (representing the conceptual background of the metalanguage).

The circular surface of the metalanguage is represented in perspective in this figure, but must be imagined as cutting the axis *A1 D1* perpendicularly. *Cm* should be conceived as a reflection on *C1*, and *Bm* as a reflection on *B1*, the metalanguage *m* remaining either external to the transparent language *l* or transparently contained in it, according to whether we conceive the language *l* as a plane surface or as a sphere.

The language *l* and the metalanguage *m* must be reciprocally transparent, the volume of *l* containing the surface of *m* (represented by the ellipse *Dm Am*) and the surface of *m* being external at all points to the perpendicular plane surface of *l*.

BACKGROUND

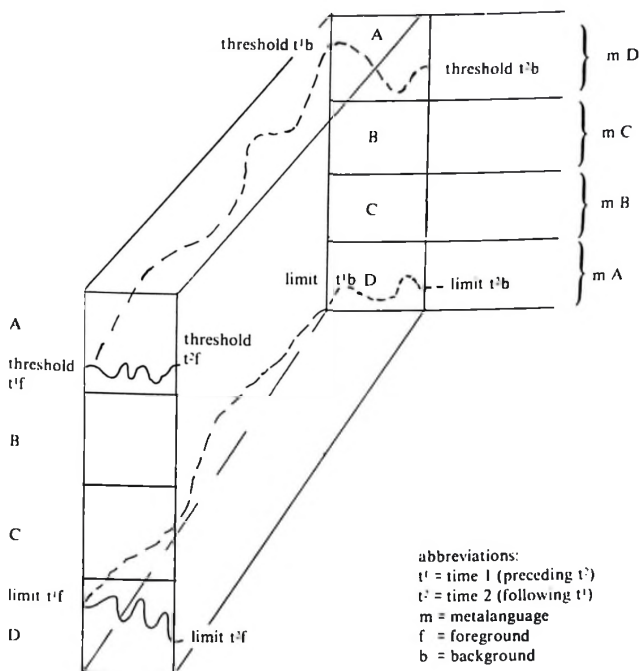
So far, of course, we have no reason for figurating a language situation I by a sphere, except that, for it to generate its metalanguage, it must be conceived as a sphere.

The first dimension, the line, was sufficient to account for the levels of a language situation in "Language and Thought." The second dimension, the surface, was introduced to account for the time elements in "Language, Time and Freedom." The third dimension, volume, may represent, as we have assumed, the background elements of culture.

Up to this point, we have been concerned exclusively with the surface elements of both main types of language situations. That the reality directly referred to on the D level is only an infinitely tiny part of the

Figure 17

Background Thresholds and Limits



whole reality (implied by the same language situation) cannot be doubted. That the thought, and consequently the identity involved in a particular language game, is only part of the whole background of thought implying and presupposing even one single individual work or concept, is not to be denied either. Of language on the C level, we know that, apart from the whole synchronic and diachronic, analogical and etymological background, the simplest sentence constitutes such a complex structure that three dimensions are not too many to account for all the invisible and inaudible operations of language.

To try and merely enumerate the detailed contents of this background would not be beyond the scope of a complete theory of literature, but the present study fulfills its aims if the dimensions, functions and limits of each element are clearly indicated.

The difficulty of figurating the background elements lies in the fact that, as in the case of the metalanguages, the corresponding language situation must be made transparent for them to be seen, or that they must be shown in perspective, according to the laws of descriptive geometry. In most cases, of course, we assume that the background elements are imagined behind the foreground elements, and we may even assume that they are not motionless. What in a given language situation is seen through a transparent foreground may very well, in another language situation, appear on the foreground. We may also take for granted that in all cases there is no foreground without the corresponding background and that a simple law of interaction links both elements. This law is adequately formulated for our purposes by W. T. Jones⁵ in the following equation:

$$E = f(F, B)$$

meaning that experience E (by which we mean a language situation) is function of both its foreground and its background.

In this context, "foreground" means the immediate experience, for instance, of a work of art or of a scientific experiment by a spectator who attends, say, a performance of a play or one demonstration of the first law of thermodynamics. This individual spectator will of course understand what he sees in his own way. This depends entirely on his own preparation, which determines the extent to which he understands the meaning of the play or the implications of the experiment. In this context "background" (in perspective on fig. 17) means the extent of the preparation presupposed by the achievement, the communication to other contemporary individuals, the transmission to future generations, and the understanding by contemporary or later generations of works of art or scientific concepts.

⁵ W. T. Jones, *The Sciences and the Humanities*, University of California Press, 1965, p. 78.

In the case of our spectator, the extent of both his immediate experience and his preparation is likely to lag behind what he would need for a full understanding, so that his experience does not cover the whole field of the language situation he is trying to come to terms with. In that case we may affirm that his understanding is limited. A full understanding would cover the whole field, and this is possible only with the help of a metalanguage.

In spite of the richness and variety of its foreground and background elements, however, a language situation has its own limitations. To find out exactly where they lie and how they can be figured will be the concern of the next chapter.

THRESHOLDS AND LIMITS

We have been led into admitting, in "Language and Thought," that for both historical and linguistic reasons—in order to transcend the limitations of the basic language situation—a divergence between the descriptive and expressive modes of perception is in course, and in "Language, Time and Freedom" we have tried to account for the consequences of this divergence for cultural communication and transmission.

Certain works of art have a lasting value, are unique and irreplaceable, and certain scientific concepts constitute progress with respect to what is already acquired. This fact, however, does not exclude the creation of new works of art or the indefinite continuation of scientific progress. This means that each work of art or scientific conception, because it is necessarily limited in its scope as well as in its implications, depends, for its survival on its being involved in further attempts at expression or description.

The condition for the continuity of the creative effort lies in the ability on the part of relatively few artists and scientists to reach certain levels which, to be maintained, must be arduously reached. The works or concepts which fall short of these levels have to be abandoned. This requirement varies according to whether we have to do with an artistic culture or with scientific progress, so that we have to consider each case separately.

In both cases, however, there is a level of adequacy, that is, a level of objective validity which may be situated on any of the D levels, and a level of creativity which may be situated on any of the A levels. Let us call "threshold" the level of creativity and "limit" the level of adequacy.

a) Artistic Thresholds

In art and in literature, the threshold marks the degree of originality of a single work and, when the line is continued, of a series of works

belonging to the same tradition. The criteria for the recognition of a threshold are necessarily comparative and their establishment requires a highly-developed critical background, for the critics and art historians who use the metalanguage of art or literature must be in a position, not only to recognize the existence of a tradition and to place individual works in that tradition, but also to ascertain how far each individual work constitutes an original contribution to or simply a product of that tradition. Besides, as it is rare for a contemporary work of art or literature not to influence or be influenced by works in other languages or cultures, the criterion must be comparative. The necessity for comparative literature and, as a consequence, for comparative criticism,⁶ need not be demonstrated here. The purpose of these disciplines is to find out how far one work or a series of works may be said to be original, that is, to contribute to a continuous artistic development.

The requirements for these disciplines transcend the limitations of any individual critic and even the conjugated efforts of one whole school of critics or art historians, who must be in a position to understand not only the text but also its background and implications, and to compare, not only various levels of originality which often transcend the limits of their knowledge and understanding, but also the factors for the survival of works or traditions in the lifetime of the critics themselves, who necessarily ignore the direction in which the work or tradition will be continued, and thus must either contribute a creative effort or arbitrarily decide on future movements, according to their limited background and taste.

For our purposes, however, it will be sufficient to represent (on figure 17) the threshold of creativity by continuous lines on the A levels, the surface line t¹f to t²f (fig. 17) representing the foreground evolution, the lines t¹f to t¹b representing the background implied in one single work, the line t¹b to t²b representing the background evolution of a single work or of a series of works, and the same three lines, but reversed, on the D levels of the corresponding metalanguage, representing the extent to which the critic's understanding of originality should be raised in order to be adequate.

b) *Artistic Limits*

Here the divergence between the descriptive and the expressive language situations obliges us to take account of two different qualities of objective validity. The reality to which a work of art—even a nonfigurative one—refers to or stands for is not analytically and descriptively acted

⁶See Joseph Strelka, *Vergleichende Literaturkritik*, Francke Verlag, Bern and München, 1970.

Figure 18

Magical Circle, Threshold and Limit in Art (Expression)

Invisible subject penetrated and affected by the work,
but capable of understanding and criticizing his
inside experience of the work as an object

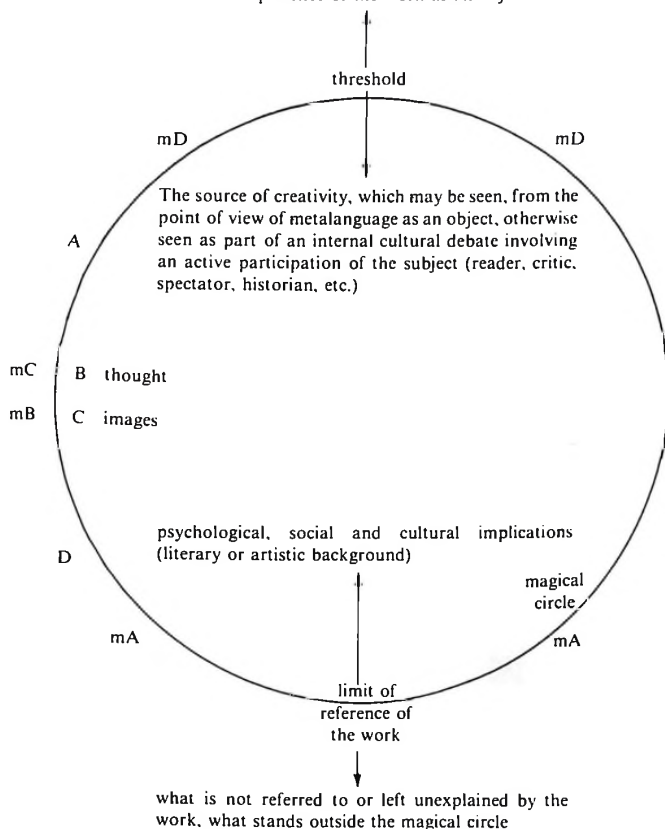
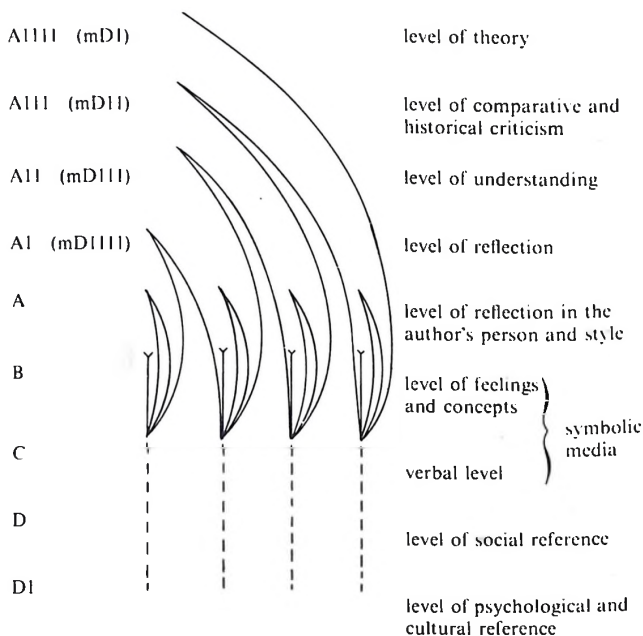


Figure 19

Levels and Metalanguages in Literature

Remarks: 1. In this case, the term "threshold" does not mean a separation between levels of a language situation. "Understanding" implies an interaction between the object of the metalanguage (literature) and the reflection on literature, for the reader, critic or historian is from the start deeply penetrated and affected by his object. The lack of pure objectivity, however, does not detract from the value of nonscientific theories of literature or from the validity of criticism.

2. The reference to social, political, psychological and cultural reality in works of a predominantly expressive character may have a high informative value, but does not lend itself to a deterministic, causal, or relational cognitive process. As a result of the absence of a strictly rational knowledge, the succession in time of the various levels of reference is not generative. Hence no "progress" on these levels, contrary to what happens in a descriptive language situation, but organic change engendered by the creative activity.

3. The superposed levels of the metalanguages appear in the reversed order of the creative levels.

upon, as in science, but symbolized, for the primary function of reality, in the arts and in "pure" literature, is to express, beyond individual experience, the communicable self mediated by language.

Thus, in the arts of expression, reality is not acted upon, as in science, but simply referred to. What is acted upon is the means of expression. The extent of a field of reference, though it also matters, cannot serve as a criterion for the evaluation of a work of art, but rather the quality and intensity of the reference, as well, of course, as its expressive value. The criterion for this reference cannot be a threshold between the inside and the outside of expression—which is actually so frequently crossed in both directions that it would be blurred by usage—but must be described as the convergence of a certain number of referential lines without which no coherence, understanding, and no interpretation of what the work is about would be possible. The three linear limits of expression in figure 17, with the reversed linear limits of the corresponding metalanguage (criticism), mark the convergence of various expressive approaches to reality: the only criterion of objective validity is based on the adequation, consistency or convergence, of the various levels of reference to reality, and of all these levels the rarest and least important is the level of pure objectivity observed in the scientific approach, for the scientific approach is not expressive; on the contrary, it aims at not subjectively interfering. Various names have been given to these levels, according to the period and the point of view. It is easy to recognize in them Dante's four levels of meaning: realistic, metaphorical, anagogical and allegorical.⁷ From other points of view, of course, other categories will appear, for the richness of linguistic, and especially poetic reference to reality, and the corresponding variety of linguistic resources are such, that no one will ever be able to fix the categories of meaning.

The controversies about the meaning of Andrew Marvell's poem, *The Garden*, may serve as an illustration. On one extreme side of the controversy were to be found those critics who saw in *The Garden* a purely descriptive poem, though rich in internal metaphors. On the other extreme were to be found those who tried to demonstrate that the poem had so many levels of meaning that the actual garden where he lived for some time was a mere pretext for the poet, who used it for symbolical and allegorical purposes.

Without taking sides in the controversy, we are forced to admit that, if the poem really has various layers of significance, these must concord in such a way that a line of convergence can be drawn somewhere and that, if the poem is purely descriptive, the adequacy of the description must be in accordance with the literary means of expression used for the poet's purposes (here we find again Aristotle's rule of "correctness of lan-

⁷II *Convivio*, Trattato secondo, I.

guage"⁸). In any case, a convergence must take place (and a line of convergence can be drawn), without which it is impossible to understand the poem.

The preceding example is clear enough, but it does not show how the line may be continued from t^1 to t^2 . Another simplified illustration will do. Let us take as an instance William Blake's phrase "fearful symmetry" in the poem entitled *The Tiger*. Today this phrase does not sound particularly audacious, but in Blake's time, for those who were used to the Augustan standards of stylistic propriety, it seemed quite audacious to associate a geometrical notion, "symmetry," with an affective quality, "fearful." In this case Blake's threshold of originality corresponds to a higher (in our figure deeper) level of convergence, for the more divergent the fields of reference united in the phrase are, the stronger the poetic effect must be. Contrary to science, which analyzes, poetry aims essentially at providing a synthetic view of the world, and its main resource consists in the metaphor.

But the example of this short phrase shows us at the same time how a line of convergence is continued. We experience, by reading it today, that Blake's undeniably high (or deep) level of convergence and audacity has been raised (or deepened) by some poets whom we have read, though what sounds less audacious to us keeps enough of its impact and fascination for *The Tiger* still to achieve its strange effect on us. The line is continued, but not effaced.

c) Scientific Thresholds

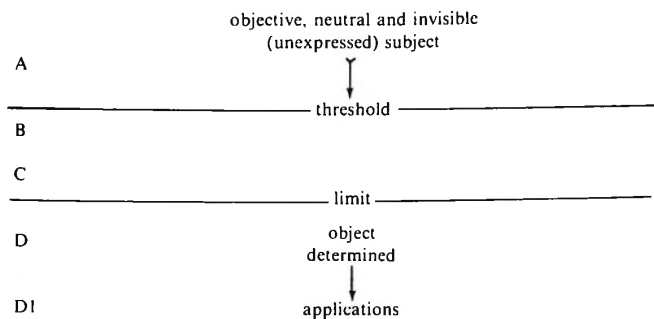
The level of scientific creativity could be determined fairly easily, in theory and at first sight, by comparing the stand of former acquisition, in a given field of scientific investigation, with a new contribution. This simplified procedure would seem to apply at least to the minor contributions which do not modify any overall scientific conception, for instance to a large body of academic work which confines itself to bringing supplementary information into an already conceptualized field.

This simple procedure does not apply, however, when the field is not yet conceptualized or when the new information modifies the underlying theory. In the case of a mere increase of the information contents, such as may be contributed, for instance, with the help of computers, the criterion of creativity obviously does not apply.

One typical example of a radical modification of scientific concepts is the Copernican revolution in the field of astronomy: Copernicus did not so much contribute a new quantity of information as a completely new

⁸ *Rhetoric*, Book III, chapter 5. Modern Library, New York, 1954, p. 175.

Figure 20
Scientific Threshold and Limit



Remarks: 1. The terms "subject" and "object" refer to this particular language situation and do not constitute an absolute distinction.

2. In this figure the movement indicated by arrows is objective, that is, directed at the object.

3. The language-thought levels (B and C) are transparent.

4. There is no magical circle.

concept of astronomical motions, tracing the real movements behind the apparent ones. The whole revolution amounted to a mere change from a relative to an objective point of view.⁹

Among the classical examples, Newton's law of gravitation marks a creative step in that it applies a rational explanation to a phenomenon, weight, which was taken for granted. The much-disputed question as to whether the discovery was made in an empirical way, or logically, as a mere extension of Pythagoras' theorem, need not preoccupy us here, for we are concerned solely with the extent to which a scientific statement may be said to be creative and consequently may be named a discovery. From our point of view the essential point about Newton's law is not the information it gives about the attraction of celestial bodies, but the penetration of a new field of reality with rational means.

Thus, scientific creativity consists entirely in the exercise of the rational faculties, with the condition that they involve the whole field of observation in a rational process. There is no other possibility for science than of determining reality, and reality must respond in that it lends itself to a

⁹"C'est seulement depuis Copernic que l'homme n'est plus au centre du monde." A. Koyrè, *La Révolution astronomique*, Paris, Hermann, 1961, p. 15.

rational investigation which obeys certain rules of logic. This does not mean in the least that reality is rational in itself, but that, in a scientific language situation, it is necessarily caught in a rational process. The creative advance of a rational process determines the threshold of scientific creativity, and the extent of its application to a field of reality sets the limit of adequacy. The difference between scientific and artistic creativity lies in the double condition that the artistic process does not catch reality in a purely rational process and consequently does not determine reality and that, besides, the artist is free to use other means of approach than the purely rational ones, thus involving reality in a process of transfiguration, according to a great variety of subjective or existential points of view and to the corresponding linguistic means.

d) Scientific Limits

We have already defined the limit of scientific adequacy as the extent of application of a rational process. A classic example illustrating the variations of this limit is the generalization of the theory of relativity, which in its turn implied a limitation of the applicability of Newton's law of gravitation.

The theory of relativity rises to a high level of applicability, and a still higher level of generalization is not unthinkable, but the highest possible level will always remain a limit: there is a threshold that can never be passed in that the scientific approach must remain analytical, wherever the limits of generalization and applicability may reach. This means that the most universal formula will always consist of a set of rational relationships involving various elements. Reality as a whole cannot be scientifically approached, for the scientific process is basically analytical. The artistic process, on the contrary, though incapable of a gradual and purely rational approach, sets the distinctness of elements in the background while emphasizing various types of unity which are not given, but must be created by projecting the self on its object, thus establishing a relationship of apparent identity between the signified and the signifying components of language. The conditions of objectivity required of any scientific language situation do not allow for any other type of relationship between the signifying and the signified components of scientific languages than the one between active rationality and determined object: the objective self will always remain apart, detached and unaffected.

Thus the scientific limits may be qualified as open, that is, indefinitely extensible, as involving no affective commitment, and as expressing logical processes in the form of rational concepts. Besides, by conceiving its object as determined, the scientific mind is endowed with a power which art lacks. Correspondingly, the power which science lacks is that of projecting the self on reality, so that the both subjective and objective

reality thus created surrounds the whole language situation with a kind of magical circle. In that sense the artistic thresholds and limits may be qualified as closed, and the power of art is exerted not on reality as a determined object, but on man and his world.

CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND TRANSMISSION

The fact of communication has been thus far only briefly sketched. Communication takes place, as we have seen in "Language and Thought," when the concepts in the speaker's and in the hearer's mind are identical. If things were simply and exactly so it would be possible to replace ordinary language by one universal and purely rational language, it would even be advisable to abandon all existing languages in favor of this perfect means of communication.

Things, however, are not so simple, and this for two main reasons. For one, thought and language are indissolubly linked and yet have different functions. This means that even if two concepts were precisely identical they would need the intermediacy of variable symbols for their expression and communication, expression and communication being always used as means for a variety of ends and purposes. Thus, symbolic logic cannot be used in a heuristic situation and for didactic purposes with all small children, and mathematics cannot be taught with the same degree of abstraction at all age levels.

Anyone who tries to communicate a difficult concept must build on the conceptual and experiential background of his interlocutor, otherwise there will be no communication. This brings us to the second main reason why the assumption of identity between concepts seems to us to hide a deep fallacy. One of the conclusions of the chapter on the backgrounds is that, at all levels of a language situation, the foreground of description, or expression, stands in a relationship of solidarity with a certain depth of background. This background is so rich and so complex that it can only entail individual differences. For instance the understanding of mathematical functions presupposes an extensive knowledge of geometry, among other things, but the way all the steps have been ascended depends on so many factors (individual circumstances, abilities and preferences, textbooks, schools, etc.), that the pure concepts of mathematical functions may be conceived of as a deep core or focus of convergence surrounded by a wide envelope or sphere of diverging heuristic situations where the use of ordinary language is inevitable.

When we speak of the identity of concepts, we detach them artificially from their whole background, and this cannot be done without violating the simplest notions of cultural consistency, the integrity of linguistic phenomena and, in particular, the indissoluble relationship between thought and language.

We have deliberately taken examples from the field of mathematics, which was until recently the last stronghold of axiomatic thinking. There is no reason to maintain any longer that there are such things as pure axioms, invariable and closed, without history or background. Even axioms may have to be modified occasionally by experience. Without taking an empirical view of mathematics, however, we must admit that mathematics is inseparable from the language in which it is expressed, however abstract its symbols may be, and that any language is submitted to historical and creative factors.

What is true of mathematics is easier to demonstrate of other sciences. As to the arts of expression, their subjective involvement is such that conceptual identity cannot be taken into consideration. For instance, the variety of factors to be taken account of in poetry translation makes a rational rendering not only impossible but also false and, of course, incomplete.

The grammar of ordinary languages sets out to fix a certain number of rules without which communication would be impossible, but after a sufficient number of rules have been established and are observed, the transformations of the living language will entail different rules which, in their turn, will also be functional and variable. A universal scientific grammar which would correspond to an invariable structure of the human mind does not exist. Consequently, grammarians are left with the elusive fact of synchronically and diachronically variable languages, and the deeper levels of grammatical structure will never be purely conceptual. Language resists a rational investigation insofar as its field is not reserved for purely linguistic and logical elements.

Thus, even when it takes place on a purely conceptual level, in the form of logical symbols, communication contains variable elements of conception and formulation. The very choice of a logical symbol is arbitrary, and the concept represented by the symbol, if it is valid at all, must be a living concept and, as such, must be experienced.

The essential historicity of culture in all its manifestations need not be demonstrated. For instance, the modes of colloquial expression studied by De Saussure, Bally and S  ch  haye resulted in a rational discipline entitled "stylistique," but as this discipline is concerned mainly with the affective components of "la parol  ," the rules resulting from this rational investigation refer to variable factors and must be adapted and modified accordingly. The same applies to the grammar of the written language. However deep one may delve into the inner and invisible structure of language in an attempt to characterize the reciprocal functions of thought and language in all their operations as well as in the finished product, no merely rational explanation of communication will ever show at the end,

for communication is not a mechanism of transmission whereby a concept is brought in the form of symbols from person to person. If it were so, the perfect translating machine would have been invented in the eighteenth century at the same time as the first robots and automata.

The rational structure of language, which makes some kind of automatic communication and translation possible, even if it is made to cover deep levels of linguistic structures and operations, stands for the bare skeleton of the whole and live reality of language. In other words, language is part of culture, and as such cannot be fully determined or rationally examined by its corresponding metalanguage, grammar. The limitations of grammar, which entail those of technical communication and translation, must be set exactly along the threshold of creativity, respectively in the descriptive and expressive languages.

The preceding considerations cannot fail to throw a new light on the fact of communication. If communication takes place at all the levels of a language situation, it includes an element of creativity with varying thresholds, and an element of adequacy with its own fluctuating limits, and thus cannot be adequately conceived out of the whole context of cultural history.

As all the levels of a language situation are closely knit, communication does more than, say, carry the thought in someone's consciousness to someone else's consciousness. Not only the conscious levels of thought are involved in communication, but also the unconscious background. This includes a much vaster area than we are used to associate with the phenomenon of communication, and if an element of creativity must be added to the natural control of adequacy taking place whenever the reference of the words heard is sought, then we may rightly say that the limits of communication are unfathomable and unpredictable.

What is communicated, then, in a descriptive or expressive language situation, is not only the actual foreground of formulation, but also the whole referential field with all its implications, so far as the corresponding background is present in the hearer or the reader. In this case the process of communication consists in calling forth in the hearer's or reader's awareness something that already exists in him: the effect of communication is to shift to the foreground something that was lying in the background, or to bring to awareness something that was differently focused. But this is not the whole explanation, for we still have to account for the element of creativity in communication. If what the speaker says is original, how will the hearer be able to receive, discern, understand and appreciate it?—for what is original cannot already exist in the hearer and consequently cannot be called forth from his background and brought to awareness. There seems to be no other hypothesis than of a generative communication, in the sense that the creative act which entails

originality must be freely generated in the hearer. Is there no contradiction in this hypothesis of a free influence? The only possibility of avoiding contradiction consists in specifying that originality acts as a kind of incentive, while the whole operation leading to the understanding of the end-product of originality must autonomously be made by the hearer.

To sum up, communication may be characterized as a double operation of shifting part of the listener's existing cultural background to the foreground and of inciting him to meet a possible originality by proceeding to a certain number of operations in an autonomous and, if necessary, creative way. When someone says that something is inexpressible, ineffable or incommunicable, we may conclude that he fails to provoke this double operation.

If the preceding hypothesis proves adequate, it must be verified in its application to the related phenomena of cultural transmission. Communication from person to person, in the case, for instance, of an immediate exchange of words, may be conceived as simultaneous, in spite of its actual duration, for it continuously and simultaneously involves two persons engaged in a reciprocal language situation. While the one speaks, the other may often catch himself in the act of simultaneously preparing his answer. This form of communication is frequently used in ordinary life, but we cannot say that it is the only means of communicating.

In the case of someone reading a book written centuries ago, we have a form of nonsimultaneous communication for which we use, in this context, the term of cultural transmission. The operations are similar to those of simultaneous communication, but their modalities, functions, ends and results are different, as a consequence of the historical separation between the writer and the reader.

For culture to be usefully and efficiently transmitted through several centuries, the background of the book must contain permanent elements of adequacy, even though its foreground may be partly discarded, and its creative threshold must lie on a continuous line leading to contemporary books. The double operation of shifting backgrounds and inciting autonomous operations can then be verified, for if permanent background elements are available, the reader will be able to call forth part of them to the foreground, and if a continuous line of creativity can be drawn, the reader will be able to meet the end-product of past originality.

In reality we have already seen that the modalities of cultural transmission differ according to whether we have to do with descriptive or with expressive language situations, the main difference lying in the fact that in the former transmission is focused on the conceptual contents, in the latter, on the actual works. Cultural transmission adds to simultaneous communication the dimension of permanence which we have sought in vain in the structures and rules of logic and grammar. Culture must be conceived as a whole with its own permanence, and yet must be con-

stantly created and re-created. Culture is the living whole that adds the element of permanence to life, for however fastidious and difficult the operations of cultural transmission may be, their end-product is ever present and alive.

There is, however, no final end-product of culture, for the simple reason that culture must be endlessly and finitely created, continued and re-created, so that culture cannot finally be located anywhere in the past, just from the point of view of historical criticism, but must be approached in terms of what is actually being created, continued, and re-created. The received notions of tradition, as we have seen, do not sufficiently account for cultural transmission, which is definitely not a mere transfer through the centuries of certain valuable cultural goods, like paintings or carved gods. Even pure concepts, to be communicable at all, must be alive. This quality of being alive and present places culture in a state of permanent resurrection. This theological notion, used in one of the chapters of my *A Philosophy of Literature*, is not absolutely adequate, but remains the best description of the fact that culture grants a second life to whoever participates in it. It can be transmitted beyond the life of individuals, on condition that each individual gives it his present life and thus continues the past and prepares the future. In this sense, culture may be said to concentrate in the present, because it is alive and finite, all the second life there is and will be.

Moreover, this essentially creative second life, though it is not the source of any power, for instance, of political power, assumes the highest degrees of responsibility (described in the corresponding chapter of *A Philosophy of Literature*), for culture is finally the life that depends on man: he alone created it, continues it and re-creates it. It is fragile, but not mortal; it is finite, but all-embracing.

Finally, all culture is human. This does not mean that culture is unnatural or artificial or irreligious or antireligious or profane, but that culture originates in man and is transmitted with two goals in view. The oneness of being, and the taming of wild nature, both quite remote.

SEX AND FREEDOM

Being human means nothing less and nothing more than being free, and we know exactly where to draw the threshold of freedom: man ceases to be free when he ceases to create. For us, freedom is not a philosophical problem. We are not asking Heimsoeth's question, "what ontological doctrine underlies the doctrine of freedom?" Nor do we stop at Kant's setting of the problem: "As an appearance man is subjected to the causal sequence of events in space and time, as an intelligible being he is free. As an intelligible being he can intervene by a free decision in the causal

system of natural events and make an original new beginning and he therefore has causality through freedom."¹⁰ For us there is no "causal system of natural events": causality is not inherent to nature, but imposed by language, and freedom is not in the intelligible being as opposed to man as appearance, but in creative man. For us, the difference between man as appearance and the intelligible being, is not a philosophical but a linguistic distinction. In other words, what Kant takes for a philosophical problem, freedom, and causality, may be defined as the two sides of the threshold in a scientific language situation. So we do not know what freedom is in itself, just as we do not know what reality is in itself (if there is any such thing, which may very well exist and thus provoke philosophical questions, but need not exist from our point of view), but we are in a position to know exactly where the threshold between freedom and causality lies, at least in a scientific language situation, where there is no such thing as absolute freedom or absolute causality, but only a threshold below the A levels, such as whatever crosses it to the side of the object will be seen as submitted to causality by a person who is free—always in the typical scientific language situation—insofar as he is the agent, in other words, insofar as he lies above the threshold.

In this respect, we may advance the idea that freedom and sex have one thing in common: we create false problems out of each of them whenever we forget that they do not exist in an absolute sense, but in a functional one. It is just as vain to define maleness in itself, as causality without threshold. Sex is part of a relationship with a finality (the continuation of the race), just as cultural transmission depends on creativity, with the difference that culture is not a natural process, whereas sex is. But as a natural process involving the human race, sex will inevitably become a problem, for sex too will inevitably have to be placed in a language situation, and thus will be approached both descriptively and expressively. When approached descriptively, sex will appear in a logical light and as purely functional, but the same, when approached expressively, will appear as stained by human feelings and thus caught in a net of undetermined relationships, which we call love. Now love, in its turn, is another philosophical and theological problem that vanishes when reported in a language situation, for love has its artistic threshold, just as sex has its scientific threshold. We are in a position to characterize the linguistic morphology of both in such a way that none looks as problematic as in Sartre's phrase "Slime is the revenge of the In-itself. A sickly sweet, feminine revenge which will be symbolized on another level by the quality "sugary."¹¹ For us, sex is not a problem of being and nothingness,

¹⁰Both quotations are from Gottfried Martin's *Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science*, Barnes and Noble, New York, 1961, pp. 171-72.

¹¹Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, tr. Barnes, Philosophical Library, New York, 1956, p. 609.

but a natural function seen from two basic linguistic points of view. The object of male love may be slimy and sugary: this depends on where we set the threshold, and consequently on whether we place the whole relationship on a scientific or on an artistic language situation, where it will appear either as a determined sexual relationship or as the expression of human love.

Maybe sex is more intimately connected with the notion of threshold than it appears at first sight for, like a threshold, it clearly marks a separation between subject and object insofar as it belongs to a language situation. But sex is not language: it is only a very common and frequent occasion for linguistic intercourse and a common background object of language.

Like a language situation, however, a sexual relationship has its threshold and limit. Though the sexual partners are normally two and separate, they are involved in one single and complex relationship. In the case of one of the partners seeing the other as an object, there is a threshold which he must pass and a limit to his drive, passion and endeavors. Thus we see how difficult it is not to take a sexual relationship for a kind of natural, primary and underlying language situation, why the symbolism of literature, mysticism, theology and esoteric science is permeated with sexual polarity, to what extent not only artistic and literary expression, but also scientific dispositions, have to do with the sexual impulse, and why the very contents of art and literature so frequently refer to sex and love: procreation underlies cultural transmission in the same proportion as freedom underlies creativity or as sex underlies human love, or, finally, as nature underlies culture.

CHAPTER 6

Artistic and Literary Expression

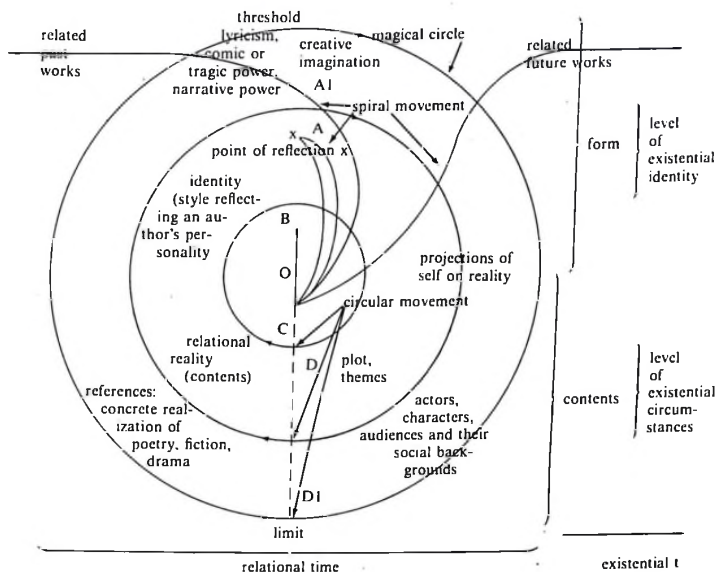
CORRESPONDENCE AND COMPENSATION

As a result of the deep polarity of both nature and culture, we are witnessing a double historical development in two divergent but not contradictory directions. If we are trying to follow the road of artistic and literary expression first, it is because of its right of historical priority. Science may indeed be considered as included in the earliest attempts at expression that we know, though the term "science," in its present acceptation, could not be relevantly applied to the paintings of Lascaux, for example. Besides, "artistic and literary expression" can hardly be dissociated from the magic, mythical and religious functions which it was originally supposed to fulfill.

As our main endeavor is not to classify culture into categories but was defined as an attempt to comprehend its internal structure and thus understand its basic unity, we would do well to precede our study of the modalities, genres and historical developments of expression and description with a methodical investigation of expression in all its implications: mythical, religious, literary, artistic and scientific.

One of the most general aspects of expression is that it draws what we have called a magical circle—coinciding with its thresholds and limits—around its language situations (fig. 18). This magical circle can be explained by saying that both subjective (on the A levels) and objective (on the D levels) references are included between the threshold and the limit of a given language situation. This means that an attitude of pure objectivity, as was late developed in the exact sciences, does not serve for expressive purposes, since the objective components of expression will always have to be related with the corresponding subjective components. This fact of correspondence is what distinguishes expression, in its most general implications, from description. In description, the subject is simply expelled from the core of the language situation (the core inside

Figure 21
Movement in Literature



the threshold and limit) and reduced to a neutral and consequently universal self; there is no magic circle any more. In expression the subjective components are present as a function of their response to the objective components. The specifically linguistic components, on the B and C levels, stand in between, and consequently serve as intermediaries or symbolic media.

The function of the symbolic media can be defined as concretizing the correspondence between the subjective and the objective components. We say that expression aims at finding a concrete form in symbols which represent, not particular objects, but the oneness of the corresponding subjective and objective components of a language situation.

But another consequence must be drawn from the fact of correspondence. The subjective components are likely to keep the initiative in an expressive language situation: this may be represented by a circular movement originated in the A levels as a response to the presence of the D

levels. In this case, the expressive language situation will have to be figured in the form of a series of concentric circles with a double, circular and spiral movement, accounting for the reflections already mentioned in "Language, Time and Freedom."

The circular and spiral movement of an expressive language situation reveals the existence of an energy of which we know, thus far, only the source on the A levels, and of a tension between the A and the D levels acting like a magnetic field, in that concentric half-circles of meaning join the opposite poles (A and D) of the magnet (fig. 22).

This movement is characteristically internal and acts like a force of attraction: the attention required by a work of art does not call for external evidence, but contains all its own referential elements. Hence the impossibility of finding in art a proof or evidence of anything external to it: this is possible only in the case of the scientific movement, which alternately enters a situation and leaves it in search of external evidence, thence to enter a new situation.

The specifically linguistic components of an expressive language situation, on the B and C levels, called the symbolic media, are surrounded with a magnetic field of subjective and objective components, all participating in the same tension and meaningfully ordered on the same circular and spiral lines. The symbolic media are thus provided with their own source of energy and with their own elements of reference, so that a work of art must be self-sufficient and constitute an independent unit. In other words, the symbolic media (words, stage, screen, painting on canvas or on wall, musical notes, etc.) are issued from a specific source of spiritual energy and evoke the necessary references to reality under the condition that these are included in the same field of attraction. Thus the referential value of art depends on the choice of the symbolic media which, in music, do not reach beyond the figurative limitations of sound (these are none the less wider than is commonly believed, as electronic music, for instance, surprisingly shows.)

Self-contained and yet open to a hardly discernible harmony with the ambient world—otherwise it could not be transmitted through time—art resembles the whirls and spins, the tension and the incredible energy of the infinitely subtle world of the atom as it is sometimes figured with the help of geometric figures. It is not surprising that this mode of expression should spend, at all times, the incalculable energies contained in all the varieties of art, including its mythical, religious, cognitive, didactic, social and political usages and functions.

In spite of its natural foundations and of the similitude of its processes and motions with natural processes and motions, the artistic experience is not only different, as we have repeatedly supposed, but also opposed, and

in a way, complementary to ordinary life experience. It has been observed that art was used in certain periods as a kind of compensation for the dreariness, hopelessness, cruelty or boredom of ordinary or real life, and that the function of art in the same periods is that of a drug, a sublimation, a religion, a refuge or an escape.

This phenomenon is often related with a dissociation of art forms and with doctrinal divergences, like the dissociation in the second half of the nineteenth century between, on the one hand, the doctrines of materialism (Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*), positivism (Auguste Comte), and realism or naturalism (Emile Zola)—all doctrines more or less directly associated with the social and political consequences of the industrial revolution—and, on the other hand, the doctrines of estheticism, art for art's sake, (Théophile Gautier, Oscar Wilde), art as replacing religion, (Stéphane Mallarmé, Dante Gabriel Rossetti), as well as the powerful symbolism of the naturalists, in contradiction to their own theory of the novel (the symbolism of the "crachat" [spitting] opening and closing *Germinal*, by Zola, and the mystical, anti-materialistic ending of *The Octopus* by Frank Norris).

But this dissociation apparently displays some morbid aspects of the normal compensative value of art with respect to ordinary experience. Ordinary experience flows and thus becomes synonymous, to a certain extent, with natural life. Art, as we have seen, constitutes a kind of second life: it is self-contained and transforms the linear flux of time in a circular and spiral movement, where time is not stopped but attracted by a kind of magnetism which makes it whirl from its subjective to its objective poles and around the symbolic media. In art the flux of time is loaded with meaning because it is caught within the boundaries of what we have called a magic circle. We may even invert a common prejudice against art by saying that it is ordinary experience that constitutes a form of escapism in allowing time to flow away. This paradox, however, should not be taken too seriously, for science, by breaking the magical circle, does not either allow time to flow quite in vain. . .

INTERNAL MOVEMENTS IN LITERATURE

As we have described it in "Language, Time and Freedom," the spiral movement originates on the B level, is reflected on the A level, and is connected, on the superior A levels, with both past and future works of the same tradition (see figure 21), all three stages reflecting themselves on the C level, thus being connected with the referential fields on the levels D and DI (dotted line). This movement represents the bare skeleton of

artistic creation and transmission and can be applied to any mode of expression, by word, color, sound, form or any combination of them.

Complementary to this spiral movement, which tends to widen and connect the circles, we find a circular movement around the center 0 (figure 21), whereby B is connected with C, A with D and A1 with D1, in such a way that the impulse comes from the upper half of the language situation, finds its concrete form in the lower half, then to return through the left side to a new impulse. This movement represents self-expression in individual works, or the way they generate themselves as self-contained units apart from any tradition.

We realize, however, that these movements cannot be conceived separately, for if the spiral movement may alone account for the fact of transmission, it leaves the fact of correspondence—as defined in the preceding section—in the dark, and vice versa for the circular movement, which explains only the fact of correspondence, and cannot cross any of the levels except by tracing a perfect circle, thus maintaining the unity and individuality of the work while generating its concrete form.

Both movements must be conceived of as combined in such a way that the circular movement, engendering concrete forms which must continually remain in the foreground, may recede into the background at any moment of creation (on the B level), reflection (on the A level), or transmission (on the A1 level) and there shift to the spiral movement, which must consequently be imagined as taking place in the background.

If our description of this combined movement is accurate, it should allow for some progress in the mathematical approach to the relatively simple art of music. Ernest Ansermet tried to find the logarithms of musical intervals, for instance those of chords. If that basis were available—which, unfortunately it is not—it should be possible to find a mathematical formulation of the circular movements of self-expression combined with the spiral movements of creation, reflection and transmission. A quite rational analysis of musical inspiration, composition, and effect would thus be possible though, of course, the mathematical formulation could provide only a symbolic basis for the practice, enjoyment and understanding of music: the sounds and rhythms, as well as their imaginative perception, are irreplaceable.

In the case of literature, our abstract geometrical figuration of internal movements can only hope to bring more clarity to the often unmethodical or one-sided efforts of criticism as a metalanguage. We should always keep in mind that, although literary creation can be explained to a large extent, its self-contained complexity calls for a global comprehension, however precise the methodical and detailed analysis may be. Our method takes account of this global interaction insofar as it integrates all levels, with their backgrounds and movements, in one single whole.

INTERNAL MOVEMENTS IN LYRICAL POETRY

If we apply our mode of figuration to another relatively simple (that is, using means of expression with a low degree of variety corresponding with a low degree of interference with the expressive power) art form, lyrical poetry, we find that the creative thought or feeling (on the B level of figure 21) is expressed in a poem (on the C level) which results both from a reflection (on the A level) in the person of the poet, who gives the imprint of individual style, and from its projection (on the A' level) on the background of earlier and later related poems, which bestow or withdraw the seal of originality. This whole spiral movement is associated, in its foreground, with the received notion of form (figure 21) and covers a certain depth of existential background (on all three levels) which is often necessary for a complete understanding of the poem and must at least be implicitly present, otherwise the poem is not self-contained, and the critic, pointing to the defects, has the task of explaining what is left unexpressed or what lacks style and originality.

The poem (on the C level) refers in its turn to certain themes (on the D level), which are figured in the form of poetic images (on the D1 level), and these three elements are associated with the received notion of contents, which also covers a certain depth of implicit background with the corresponding and underlying level of existential circumstances situated outside the poetic sphere, in the linear flux of time and thus irrelevant.

INTERNAL MOVEMENTS IN THE NOVEL

Among the main differences between lyrical poetry and the novel, we rather arbitrarily choose the fact that, in many classical and modern novels, the author tells a story in prose. The reason for this arbitrariness is the fragility of any definition on the theoretical and historical levels. Besides, our method consists in proceeding gradually, thus adding the new element of narrative prose fiction.¹

From our point of view, this new element does not mean that we have to ascribe a new dimension to the novel, which would disrupt the law of compensation described in the first section of the present part. This means, on the contrary, that the novel uses more differentiated means of expression ("less simple," according to the definition given above) which are compensated by a lesser intensity of the expressive power. In concrete terms, this means that the novel, by telling a more or less realistic story about more or less fictitious characters, is generally written in prose, that is in a less intense form of expression than lyrical poetry. As a conse-

¹See René Wellek, *Theory of Literature*, Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1956, chapter 16.

quence, the themes, the plot, the narrative sequence and the composition of the novel must be placed on the same level (D) as the lyrical themes, and the characters, circumstances, actions, situations, events and descriptions of the novel must be placed on the same level (D1) as the poetic images.

Nor does this entail a fundamental change in the upper half of the language situation, for the difference in the contents is originated by a corresponding difference in the creative attitude. Thus the lyrical self reflected on the A level sets the imprint of his style on the way he deals with his theme, just as the novelist's plot, themes, narrative sequence and composition bear the imprint of an individual style: though the novelist does not directly speak about himself, he is reflected, by the spiral movement, in everything he writes. The difference lies rather in the circular movement which, as we have seen, must remain in the foreground, and where different types of thought (on the B level), identity (on the A level) and creative imagination (on the A' level) must correspond to different types of language (on the C level), reality (on the D level) and reference (on the D1 level). This difference can be defined by saying that the contents of the novel are more differentiated and its form more diffuse than those of lyrical poetry.

If the novelist introduces characters in his novel, and if these characters are so much alive that we may live with them, dislike and criticize them, feel attracted by them, or even identify ourselves with them, we readers will have a tendency to live in the novel like the characters, thus lending our own life and identity to those created by the novelist. By doing so, of course, we lose any critical standpoint, for our identity is engaged where the very personality of the author is expressed and manifested by his style, on the A level: we no longer experience the novel as if it were a literary work, but as if it were our own life; in other words we no longer see that this kind of second life grafted on our real life is entirely created by the novelist and that what it really expresses is not our own life but the novelist's identity, his originality and his style.

The lyrical self, however fictitious it may be, generally uses the pronoun "I," but the novelist uses characters. We may identify ourselves with the lyrical "I," or at least live with him and thus be brought into a particular state of mind, but we cannot forget that we are not "I," because lyrical poetry is characterized, as we have just seen, by an intensity of the form which requires an effort on the part of the listener or reader. Let us now suppose that we make the effort and are thus "carried away" in an intense lyrical state of mind. Can we identify ourselves with the lyrical "I?" Obviously, only if our personality and our poetic abilities equal those of the poet: in very rare cases.

In novel-reading, this kind of identification interferes, at least periodically, with a critical understanding, and we do not experience our reading as if it were fiction, but are pleased to live in it while enjoying the immunity of the reader, (the black novel, the tales of terror and horror play on that double enjoyment), but we do not see that the substance or identity hidden behind the characters and our own projection on the characters is no one else than the novelist, his style and his originality. We may now conclude that, whatever may be the means of expression used in a particular form of art, they disclose, reveal, mask or hide the author's personality, his style and his originality.

THE MEANS OF EXPRESSION IN DRAMA, FILMS, CARTOONS, ETC.

In drama we find, among other things, a supplementary means of expression: acting. The actor stands between ourselves and the character, though he is of course supposed to be the character and we are supposed to identify ourselves with the good, heroic or deliciously malicious characters, while opposing the weak, false or stupidly righteous as if they were our foes. As if, indeed, we lived in the play, for this is what the dramatic illusion amounts to.

The novel reader holds a book in his hands: the spectator of a performance plays at seeing real people move in a real place, while keeping his immunity, especially in the case of a bad ending. Sometimes the suspension of disbelief is even provocatively increased by the stage manager when the audience is asked to participate in the action (for instance when, in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, the soldiers walk in the middle of the spectators' rows—as if it were in the nave of Canterbury cathedral—in order to assassinate Thomas Beckett).

Drama, operas, films, cartoons, television plays, etc. use such a variety of expressive means that they proportionally increase the difficulty of finding the real identity (the author's) hidden behind an intricate order of supposed, fictitious, borrowed, projected, masked and false identities. It is even quite impossible to find any identity at all when the author becomes a mere producer using techniques (instead of expressing himself), dozens of actors, an army of technicians, bulldozers, fake battleships, the Stock Exchange and mass-produced microphones.

The categories, functions, and criteria of motion pictures, the music hall and Show Business, television and the record industry, are more social than cultural, (they may at times be anticultural and antiartistic), but if they give themselves as art they must be judged as forms of expression which, as such, release a certain quality of spiritual energy in

works the form of which must be self-contained, according to the correspondence defined in the first section of the present part. One practical test for the artistic value of a given work consists in analyzing its means of expression in order to find out whether they really correspond to a distinct original identity with its own style or whether they use the considerable resources of modern technical instruments with the purpose of producing strong effects on audiences and viewers.

All these modern technical instruments have in common a strong suggestive power which diverts their functions and their aims into nonartistic channels. The audiences and viewers exposed to their effects are transferred into a fictitious world of sensations without inwardness, and consequently without expressive function: the only inwardness of such orgies is the absurd sense it makes in the minds of the passive audience or viewers, but even the basic purpose of art—breaking solitude—is not fulfilled, for they remain without communication with an author, one who freely recreates a meaningful world, as we have shown in *A Philosophy of Literature*. Instead of means of expression, we have in this case means of suggestion which interpose a screen of unknowing between the audience or viewers and any possible source of spiritual energy, thus cutting any possible communication, and switching on instead a stream of suggestive sensations.

The Greek and French classical dramatists were quite aware of this danger when they deliberately reduced the circumstantial and external means of expression to a strict minimum in order to allow the bare drama to show itself as what it is: expression. A similar need for bareness can be observed in other arts: sculpture, painting, music, but this bareness makes them socially unimportant. This partly explains why lyrical poetry, which is esthetically so important according to the critics, plays such a negligible social function in our time.

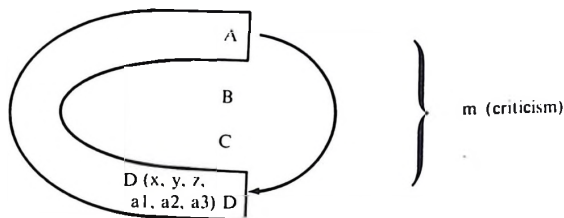
To sum up, a play, like a novel or a poem, expresses an author's creative view (in the sense that the play results from the author's search for meaning, as defined in *A Philosophy of Literature*). This creation has a compensative function in that its referential elements, the characters, are made, by acting, to look more distinctly comic or tragic than in the novel. Moreover this creation is self-contained, in that its elements do not refer to anything external, but tightly correspond to one another in such a way that the referential elements, (the "objective correlative," in T. S. Eliot's terminology) correspond to the creative view (and not to the sensations of the audience) which is expressed through the acting, the characters and the plot.

In order to contribute to a more familiar figuration of the creative movements in literature we can combine the image of the magnet, already used, with the image of the record or magnetic tape recorder, while

unifying the upper and lower levels of the language situation and representing only the circular movement:

Figure 22

body of the magnet



This figure shows how one whole literary or musical language situation is concentrated on one single point in D, from the point of view of the receiver (audience, reader, listener): he reads, listens to sounds, or sees images. The point in D may be compared with the needle of a pickup. The characters x, y and z, impersonated by the actors a1, a2 and a3, utter the words recorded by way of the circular movement A D.

The metalanguage m (criticism) which tries to describe what is happening must not concentrate on the point D, but must give account of the whole musical or literary language situation.

ART AND LITERATURE IN PERSPECTIVE

The intemporal or timeless quality of art frustrates all attempts at placing it in historical perspectives. Much can be historically explained, but there always remains something that neither fades out nor refers to any particular time. In the most remote antiquity artists testified to their being conscious of creating something eternal, and a wretched lyrical poet like Catullus knows that his mistresses will die, but his art will not.

Our purpose in describing this timeless quality is not to call in question any category of period, movement or style—invariable as they are—but to suggest an explanation for what in art does not fit in these categories. Of all the explanations proposed during centuries of criticism, the one that satisfies us least at present is the one that emerged in the nineteenth century and stated that art is a product of its times (for instance, Hippolyte Taine's theory of "la race, le moment, le milieu").

This explanation does not satisfy us because, for it to be adequate, art must have the same descriptive functions as science. If art were funda-

mentally descriptive, its reference to reality would be objectively adequate and its historical development would be progressive. It is a fact however that art does not progress, and we may even assume that something in great art does not move with time or along historical lines. There is something in great art that stands outside history, and the best critics—including Taine—have always known this fact. Illustrated art books, however scholarly, accurate, informative and useful their explanations may be, are made for the enjoyment of what is timeless in the works reproduced.

The scholars and critics explain the circumstances of a given work and contribute to the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the work as if their final aim were evaluative criticism. They make and destroy reputations, but do they really make the greatness of a work? Though they may be instrumental in establishing reputations, they cannot make a work what it is not: in the long run, art speaks for itself.

According to our theory, the timeless quality of art is represented by the circular movement, which creates a revolving time, a time that moves in instead of moving out of the works. It is further explained by the spiral movement, which causes reflections in the nonexistential identities beyond the person of the artist. The notion of value can thus be theoretically explained, though the value of a particular work cannot be abstractly defined.

Because of its magnetic quality, art has nothing but an internal structure: reality, time, and anything it may refer to must gravitate in its field of attraction. As a result, the only perspective in which art—and literature as an art—may be situated is a simultaneous one, one in which all works appear as if they were contemporary. If this were not so, no works could be compared, even if due allowance were made for the fact that works of art appear in succession.

To understand a work of art as such, apart from its historical implications, we must live in its own time. A very sharp distinction has to be drawn between its own time (the revolving, ever-present and transmissible time to which the work attracts us) and its times (the more or less remote historical period in which the work was composed). In order to really enjoy and understand a work of art we must experience it as if we were living in its own time, within its magnetic field. If we are contemporary with that work we get the impression that we naturally experience it in the right manner, but we are wrong if we identify the time in which we live with the work's own time: hence the prejudiced opinions on contemporary art by those who do not live creatively in their times. Conversely, we cannot enjoy and understand an ancient work of art as if it were a curious and strange object. Many people—and among them distinguished and rich collectors—are satisfied with knowing the historical characteristics of

a work, the style and the period to which it belongs. These people, who know so much about the commercial value of their objects, cannot enjoy and understand works of art as such.

Knowledge about the historical characteristics of art is indispensable as a means to one single end, the enjoyment of timeless art. Periods like "Minoan," "Elizabethan," locations like "Assyrian," "Chimu," and styles like "Norman," "Gothic," "Chirrugueresque" serve to identify and place a work in a historical or archeological perspective, but do not in the least represent value judgements. They may, however, contribute to establish such judgements if they are used to demonstrate that one work of a particular period, location and style is distinguished by an originality which makes it stand out: it does not belong to any period, location or style, it belongs to us, we may live in its own time.

The angle of openness described in "Language, Time and Freedom" (figure 14), and the corresponding phenomenon of critical convergence, allow us to place all original works of art in the same simultaneous perspective, regardless of their historical characteristics, but this can be achieved only with the help of archeological, historical, critical and comparative methods. Without them, no selection, no distinction, and no judgment could be made. The task of criticism is a varied and important one, for historical criticism must answer the question: "What are the historical characteristics of this work?"—comparative criticism asks: "Is this work original?"—and evaluative criticism asks: "How do I appreciate this work?"

However important its function, the aim of criticism should never be kept out of sight. Once we know which works stand out and are appreciated according to better criteria than taste, fashion, and social or political prejudice, we still have to place the works thus selected and critically investigated in a simultaneous perspective, so that they can be compared in their own, simultaneous, and internal time, apart from their historical context. Some critical notions, like "the age of Pericles," "French classicism," "romanticism" and "baroque" imply more than a purely historical distinction. The qualities associated with these notions are shared by several great works and they help us to compare, for instance, Euripides with Racine, or Delacroix with Rubens, thus enabling us to cross historical barriers.

CRITICAL DISTANCE

The metalanguage of art, criticism, uses historical and comparative methods in a more and more scientific way, but its very object eludes any scientific approach. The paradox of criticism is that it must be removed like a scaffold once the building of artistic culture has been erected, and

yet the building is never completed, and is under constant repair, so that the onlooker rather imagines than sees it, as if it were a Coliseum hidden by modern scaffolding, in a state of perpetual reconstruction and completed only by the imagination.

The last, imaginative stage of criticism can be reached only once the expensive work of planning and scaffolding has been removed. Though this phase is never quite attained, there is a point where the reconstruction is so much advanced that the imagination may bring it to completion. It is the point of optimum critical distance, which may be compared with the best spot for the contemplation of a classical building with a static perspective, not with a dynamic perspective like the Colonnade of the Vatican in Rome. This point is reached when the preliminary critical work (e.g. textual criticism, dating, placing, comparing, etc.) has reached a stage of maturity and reliability. The work to be considered can then be placed in the same critical distance as all others, as if criticism were a lens capable of accommodation (see figure 23), and focusing upon several works at the same time. Thus the critical distance is not the same for all works, but the lens focuses upon all of them simultaneously. This is imperfectly represented by the following Figure 23.

This figure (23) is imperfect insofar as it distinguishes only one critical distance for all works. To remedy this mode of representation the lens must be imagined as endowed, like the crystalline, with a power of accommodation. Besides, the optimum critical distance, which placed works of art in a simultaneous perspective, prevents us from seeing the works as they should be seen: from the inside. In order to enjoy and understand the works, the optimum critical distance must be reduced as a scaffold must be removed.

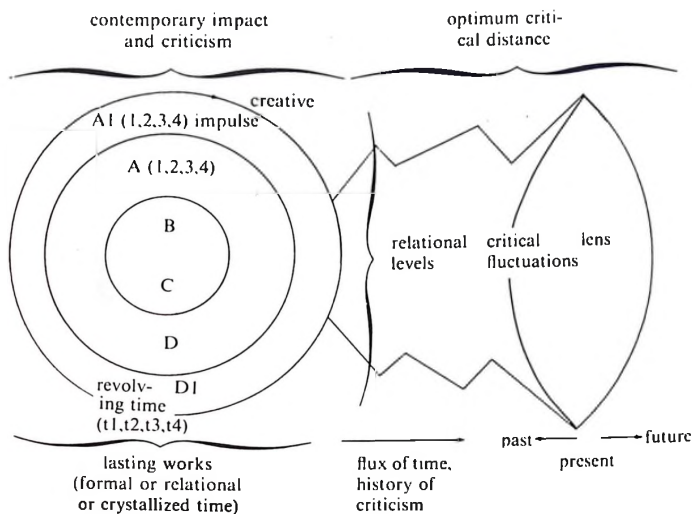
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The preceding considerations are based on the hypothesis that all works of art can be placed in the same simultaneous perspective: they imply a conception of artistic culture as an indivisible whole. Various comparative methods may serve to verify this hypothesis; one of the most direct, practical but tricky methods consists in the study of parallelism between two or several works. We may choose to study two successive works of the same author, two works by different authors in the same period, or two works by different authors in different periods and different languages and literatures, provided they offer at least one point of comparison, that is, one common point of reference in theme or in style.

In a recent study of parallel passages in Dante and in Milton,² the

² "The Evolution of Myths from Dante to Milton," in *English Studies Today*, 4th Series, pp. 237-53, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 1966; revised and expanded version: "De Dante à Milton," in *Le Paradis perdu*, 1667-1967, Paris, Minard, 1967, p. 142-75.

Figure 23



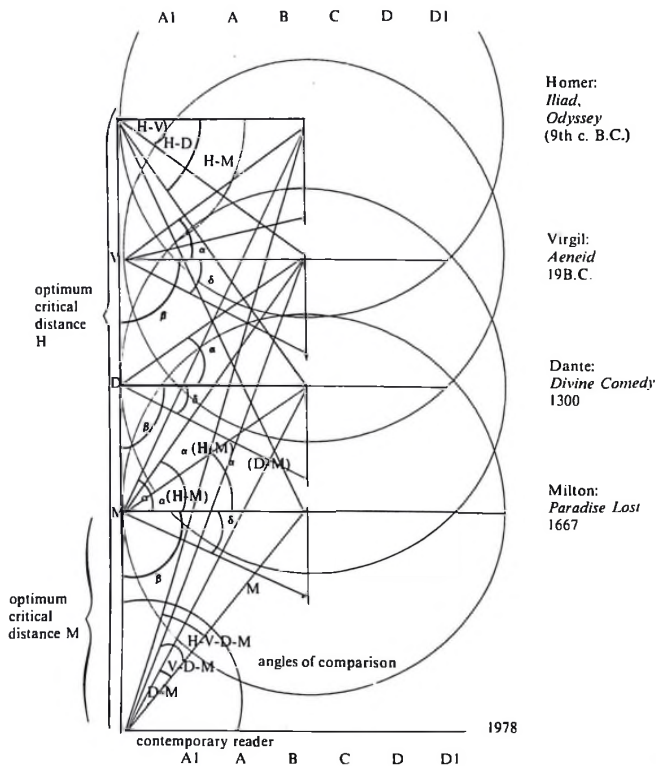
Remarks: 1. The optimum critical distance is not measurable in time units, but depends on the achievement of preliminary critical studies.

2. Once the work has been studied from various points of view, approached with the help of several methods, and situated in the right context, it can be seen as contemporary with much older and recent works (1,2,3,4) merged in A1 but separate on the other levels, thus participating in the same creative impulse and contemporary in an artistic context, that is, within the same magical circle of revolving time.

present author focuses attention on the differing treatments of the same mythological themes in the *Divine Comedy* and in *Paradise Lost*. As in many cases Milton may be supposed to imitate or to emulate Dante, the points of comparison are not lacking, and interpretation of the differences is all the less arbitrary because the passages chosen are precisely those in which both authors are supposed to meet.

The results of this study may be summarized as follows: Dante is more immediate, more imminent, more literal; Milton is more indirect, more distant, more literary. Dante's giants are real (as well as allegorical), Milton's are only allegorical. In Dante, the movement is of persons

Figure 24



Remarks: 1. For this figure to be more adequate, the optimum critical distance should be the same for all four authors, and the Milton circle should also cover part of the Homer circle (though our preceding comparison was restricted to the Dante-Milton parallelism).

2. This figure assumes that the works of four authors belonging to the same tradition are not placed in an accurately chronological sequence, but in a simple order of succession, as if the historical time separating them did not count.

3. The structure of cultural time is such that all four authors are supposed to be seen from the same optimum critical distance, the spheres of the more recent ones

among static landscapes: in Milton the landscapes move. This dynamic and baroque quality is demonstrated in almost all the parallel passages, as well as a sense of the absurd and of disharmony completely absent in Dante, who insists on participation (Communion) where Milton insists on separation (the Fall).

This brief summary suggests some of the conclusions that may be drawn from a study of parallelism: both poets are original, neither of them borrows or imitates without leaving his imprint, the divergence is theological, philosophical as well as personal. But is there a fundamental artistic difference, or does the spiritual evolution which separates Dante from Milton demonstrate that culture is divisible? If it were so, the very comparison would be impossible. It is true that the differences are varied and deep, even in the parallel passages, but a study of the different treatment by two great poets of the same mythological themes reveals a much deeper unity than a merely topical similitude: both authors participate in the same creative movement, which is all the more continuous because it cannot stop. We are all urged to express ourselves in such a way

covering those of the less recent ones. This overlapping should be proportional to the three following values or criteria (represented by angles):

α = what later works owe to earlier works;

β = the author's greatness as acknowledged by posterity, or how far one of the works is appreciated and evaluated from the point of view of a contemporary reader at the optimum critical distance (in possession of the critical apparatus);

δ = the original contribution of each work to the same tradition.

4. Once the four works are equidistant (assuming impartiality in the critical treatment of each work) and a fair evaluation of the debts (α) and individual merits (β) of each work has been reached, the main critical operation will consist in evaluating the original contribution (δ) of each work to the same tradition by subtracting the debts from the whole individual achievement:

$$\delta = -\alpha\beta$$

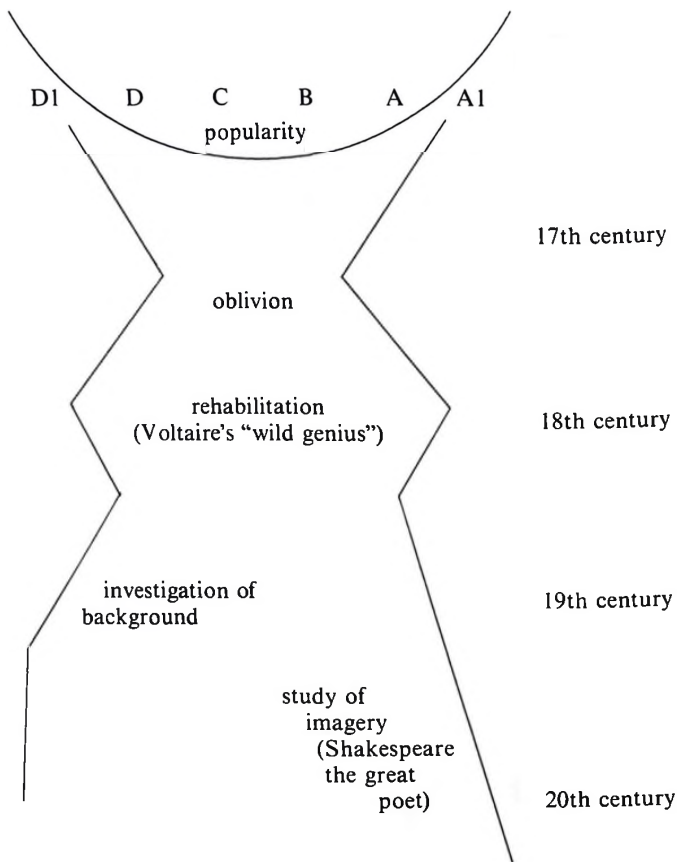
5. This operation can be verified by adding the original contribution thus found (δ) to the debts (α) objectively measured by the comparative methods, in order to confirm that both cover the whole field of creativity (β):

$$\delta + \alpha = \beta$$

This value (β) does not represent an abstract evaluation of the work in itself, including the author's original contribution and excluding his debt, but involves the convergence or consensus of the critical views, as well as the imaginative understanding and recreation of the work on the part of the contemporary reader.

6. In this way, works can be compared separately (M), in pairs (D-M), or in groups (H-V-D-M) with respect to the same tradition.

Figure 25



Remarks: 1. This figure does not represent the actual fluctuation of the Shakespeare criticism in the course of time with any degree of precision; it is a merely theoretical model.

2. The broken lines along the A and the D levels represent the critical thresholds and limits. Thus, a tendency to investigate the background (19th

that we may share our reality, our time without end, in the works from which we receive them.

To receive indiscriminately, however, is to squander what we receive. Once the basic unity of culture has been acknowledged, we must make the necessary distinctions between an author's debt to tradition, his own new contribution to existing traditions or to new traditions opened by him, and finally, the whole scope of his greatness. The relationship between these values is theoretically described in Figure 24 on page 96.

THE FLUCTUATIONS OF CRITICISM

The preceding comparative method is valid only if the works are seen from the same critical distance and if the critic's imaginative understanding is impartial. These conditions could never be fulfilled if a general consensus or particular convergence of the critical views did not take place in the course of time. Theoretically this consensus covers the whole field of culture, includes such vague divisions as "Western" and "Eastern" culture which, in their turn, include such subdivisions as "Greek," "Hellenistic," "Latin," "Renaissance," "Elizabethan," "French classical" culture, down to the individual works which, after all, do not really conform to any classification in proportion as they are "great."

No objective classification and evaluation of culture is possible, because culture cannot be analyzed like a dead object, it is constantly alive and perpetually recreated. In other words, culture is not something that is, but something that is being made, and every new great work modifies the whole perspective, just as every new conception of culture projects a new life on all works.

century) is represented by the broken line reaching in the D1 level (limit), and a tendency to stress the poetic value of Shakespeare's work is roughly represented by the long line extending in the A1 level (threshold).

3. Though without details, this figure shows not only a increasing stabilization of the fluctuations, but also a gradual and general extension of the field covered, due to the self-corrective effect of critical divergences and to the gradual accumulation of background knowledge.

4. This figure assumes that evaluative criticism does not proceed in a rational order, but in a gradual way, taking stock of its own progress. Thus criticism has its own history, and the fluctuations of a reputation depend on the vicissitudes of textual research, critical fashions, shifting focuses of interest, etc., though a growing consensus and a gradual reliability of evaluation are probable in spite of the aberrations of circumstances (theaters closed during the Commonwealth period, the burning of the Globe, etc.), prejudice and taste.

In spite of the fundamental subjectivity of culture, the whole imaginary building is based on a solid criterion: the consensus of opinion and the convergence of critical views. This criterion would not be so reliable if it were short-lived and founded upon the changing tastes of a particular society, but the fact is that it outlives whole periods and societies and crosses political and geographical borders. It does so because it corresponds to a deep human need, the need for living on a relational level. This is why artistic culture (including religion), which is not based upon such rigorous criteria as scientific culture, survives with as much life expectancy as science.

It has been observed that critical fluctuations have a tendency to flatten out after some time. This relative stability of a metalanguage that is half scientific, half imaginative, and that involves value judgements, depends, as we have seen, on two factors: the observation of a safe critical distance, and the convergence of the critical views in the case of evaluative criticism.

We try to give one historical example of this phenomenon by describing very simply and incompletely the fluctuations of Shakespeare's reputation up to the 20th century in Figure 25 on page 98.

CHAPTER 7

Scientific Culture

THE MEANING OF REASON

When in the preceding chapter (6) we use the term "expression," we take it to describe the most general characteristics of art, as distinct from science, for which we use the term "description." Now, description is as complex and elusive an activity as expression, though most people assume that they know what it means. It certainly does not mean the same thing in the rhetoric of Fabius Quintilianus as in Chomsky's syntax.

If we enquire about the causes for this historical transformation, we are confronted with all the problems inherent to the history and philosophy of science, starting with the basic options of empiricism and rationalism. The term "description" seems to cover the whole field, since it extends from the common and unscientific usage of "describing objects" to the recent acceptance of "structural description." The term "description," however, does not yield any information on its own historical transformations or on the active force and motivation behind it; this information was rather suggested than offered thus far by the qualification of "rational description."

The term "rational," as used in the preceding context, must be further defined, for it is one of the main clues in the theory of scientific culture. Theoretically, "rational" and "reason" imply "ratio" or "relation." In other words, reason tells us how things are located and related. When we use the word "things," however, we realize that reason, in this sense, supposes a projection of experience in the form of external objects—a statement which will perhaps reconcile us with certain empiricists, who have a tendency to quarrel not only with rationalism but with reason itself.

This projection must be further defined, for it is that which distinguishes description from expression. In the case of art we have a projection of the self on objects related to or corresponding with the self.

In the case of science, we may also speak of "projection," "objects" and "relation," but these terms have a different meaning because their interaction is radically different. First of all, the term 'self' must be eliminated, for it can only lead to a misconception of what we have described, in *Language and Thought*, as the neutral self. In the second place, the term "object" does not so much refer to something else other than in art, than isolate and protect things from the encroachment of subjective preconceptions. Finally, "projection," in the case of science, means that things are projected as objects, whereas in the case of art, it means that the self is projected on objects which are thus internalized.

The scientific object is thus purely objective, while the scientific neutral self is open and passive, expectant and interrogative. Description is preceded by a phase of reception during which a certain amount of information is transmitted by experience. If we analyze experience, however, we find that the term is ambiguous in that it refers both to the objects and to their perception. This type of ambiguity seems to cut across the whole field of science and breeds all kinds of epistemological misconceptions, from the coarsest to the subtlest. This misleading tendency may be curbed by describing the scientific object as placed from the start in a definite position and as ascribed a definite function from the start: thus, when we say that it is purely objective, we mean that it is committed from the start to a definite relationship.

This relationship is what we call reason. Reason is not simply an abstract human faculty, but must be defined, in our context, as the ability to place objects in a descriptive language situation. Reason acts on all levels, as shown in the following figure:

Figure 26

Science (Description)

A I	theoretical level
	threshold of induction
A	level of conceptualization
	threshold of deduction
B	level of logic and of perception
	threshold of logic and of perception
C	level of rational formulation
	limit of reference and of determination
D	level of objective reality
	limit of information
D I	level of application
	limit of application

The core of this figure, the levels B and C, may be further analyzed as follows:

a) Logic, on the level B of a scientific language situation, is the rational function which consists in applying the principles of identity and noncontradiction, according to which if E is identical with F, and F with G, E is identical with G. At this point we observe that logic is not inherent to objects as such, but underlies the relation of objects (in D) to thought (in B). Besides, logic can be exercised independently, apart from its reference to objects (but not from its formulation) in the form of abstract signs (for instance in algebra).

Pure logic uses abstract signs, that is, signs deprived of any explicit reference to objects. There are, however, other kinds of scientific signs and other applications of the principles of identity and noncontradiction, namely when the signs refer to objects, in which case a new element must be placed on the level B: rational perception. We encounter here another deep difference with the expressive languages, in that to fulfill its descriptive functions the scientific languages reduce all the elements of "thought" on the level B (including affects and emotions) to one single type of relation, for instance, of similitude and difference, or of inclusion and exclusion, based on the principles of logic. In other words, rational perception singles out and analyzes only one aspect of things; namely, their incidence in and relevance to the principles of logic. Rational perception entails a very rigorous limitation of perception, but it is, as we shall see, the only way of making perception efficient and progressive.

This is not the place to raise the vexed question of epistemology: how things are perceived. It will be sufficient, in this context, to remark that rational perception is not experienced, as in the case of the expressive languages, in an individual, unique, irreplaceable and personal way (level A), but by a neutral and exchangeable person whose mode of perception is entirely modified by and oriented toward the principles of logic. In the present perspective these principles can be considered as a preliminary option conditioning perception, the other option being the openness to experience, or the ability to adopt an unprejudiced and receptive attitude to objects, an attitude which is impossible in the case of the artistic languages because of the projection and interference of the self. Consequently, rational perception encounters no other resistance in its investigation of objects than the difficulties inherent to the acts of objectifying, analyzing and formulating: these are all internal difficulties, but the world is open to science.

b) On the level C of a scientific language situation, we find the signs. We prefer this term, somewhat arbitrarily, to "symbols," because the latter has insistently been used to refer to artistic languages,¹ though it

¹For instance, in Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Yale University Press, 1953, or in Joseph Strelka's *Vergleichende Literaturkritik und literarische Symbolik*, Francke Verlag, Bern, 1970.

also belongs to mathematical usage. The sign is a substitute for experience in that it transforms the information received, through the level B from the level D, into a language which both names and links. The sign is the linguistic form of reason: it replaces objects by the rational representation of objects; it is the adequate instrument for objective signification and rational ordering. Like logic, the sign has two aspects and two functions. On the one hand the sign is the figurative substitute for objects, on the other hand the sign transposes logic on the level of rational syntax and thus binds objects to syntactic rules which stand for causal relationships on the level D.

It is superfluous to ask, as David Hume did, whether causal relationships have an empirical or a logical origin: they are conditioned by the whole language situation; we might as well answer that they have a linguistic origin, if it would not lead to confusion. The fact is that causal relations on the level D correspond to syntactic relations on the level C, which in turn correspond to logical principles on the level B, and the objects on the level D, which are perceived on the level B, are replaced by signs on the level C. This strict parallelism throughout the lower half of the scientific language situation explains why it is impossible to disentangle the empirical from the rational elements of science. It is more fruitful to ask whether science modifies its objects or is modified by them.

SCIENTIFIC GROWTH

To answer the question whether science modifies its object or is modified by it, we would have to investigate not only the theoretical procedures of science but also their historical evolution. In the present section we shall try to set a theoretical model of scientific growth.

By growth we mean the approach to reality (level D), followed by the elaboration of information (levels B and C). We must admit from the start that scientific growth is not a continuous process, but can be split up in at least two stages, which, in turn, a precise analysis would reveal to be made up of several phases. As we do not aim at describing scientific methods, but at setting a theoretical model, however, we must tend to put aside all surface details in order to discover the general structure of scientific growth—and this exclusively from the point of view of its impact on the whole scientific language situation.

a) The first stage, the approach to reality, depends on two factors: what is already known, and which further information is aimed at, or what kind of reality is to be investigated. Any further precision as to these requisites would fall outside the theory of scientific growth; and yet we must admit that there is a third underlying factor: the origin of and active force behind scientific investigation is not to be found in the object of

science, but in its invisible subject, on the level A. It is the *libido sciendi*, or the drive of curiosity. Whatever the circumstances and the needs of investigation may be, there is only one intellectual condition which must be satisfied—but it is easy to overlook it, for it is always behind the object of science and it does not usually express itself, at least explicitly. It is all the more difficult to discover because the scientific object is definitely and constantly situated in the foreground. As curiosity underlies both factual requisites, (extant knowledge and information aimed at), it must be situated in the background of the background.

From a theoretical point of view, this element is most important, for it conditions and determines the whole process of scientific growth. When we say that scientific curiosity does not express itself, we mean in reality that it consciously refrains from projecting any subjective components on the scientific object, but we should not infer from this that there are no subjective components; we must conclude, on the contrary, that they are firmly maintained in the background. In this, of course, we oppose Locke's theory of the mind as a *tabula rasa* and its deductions in the history of empiricism: however empty the recipient of information may be, it gives its form to the information received. As a result at least three subjective background factors, paradoxically, underlie scientific objectivity, and we may partly answer the question asked at the beginning of the present section: science modifies its object in that it forces its object to satisfy an insatiable and gradual curiosity.

Further, "curiosity" also means "care," "concern" (*cura*) and involves, at its best, an intellectual responsibility. It would be wrong to see in it only a purely passive and receptive attitude, for we have seen that receptivity is one main phase of the scientific process, followed by description (the latter will be examined, below in subsection c). Curiosity is interrogative, and so, in itself active. It may be described as the preliminary cultural condition of science, for it raises a specifically existential drive to a rigorous relational level. The curiosity of the scientist is cultural insofar as its very exertion humanizes the objects of science, but few scientists are aware of this consequence: their objectivity prevents them from seeing that their object is predetermined and consequently modified by their attitude. When busy with research work, the scientist is rather likely to get a strong impression that it is his attitude which is and must be modified, but the history of science demonstrates that, in the long run, it is not simply the approach to and conception of reality that changes, but reality as set in successive scientific language situations. Before we consider these historical changes under the title "Scientific Evolution", however, we must further investigate the procedure of scientific growth.

Finally, scientific curiosity is fundamentally different from "existential" curiosity, in that it is exempt from a personal motivation. The scientific

self, as we have seen, is neutral, in that he is ready to accept whatever information is yielded by reality, so that he knows not so much what he wants to know, but factual evidence to which anyone with the same objectives must adhere. As a consequence, scientific knowledge is not only neutral but also highly transmissible, for the result of scientific research is not valid for only one person, but for anyone interested, and the work done by one is done for all. The universal validity of science would alone justify recent efforts to translate scientific texts by machine. One further implication of the preceding remarks is that the subtlest and most abstract achievements of science, which require extensive training and a high degree of specialization, must keep their quality of universal validity, even at the cost of coarse vulgarization or oversimplified didacticism: if science were to become the privilege of a caste, it would cease to be cultural. Unlike artistic culture, which will always remain highly individual and socially differentiated as a result of the uniqueness of the works of art, scientific culture must belong to all or else will deviate into other, potentially dangerous purposes, than the cultural ones.

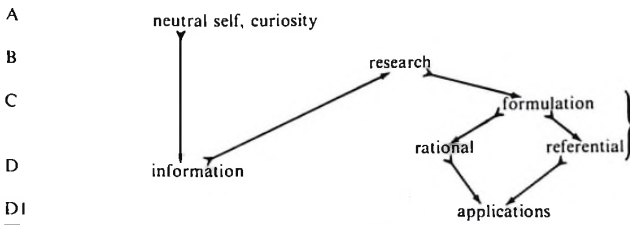
b) The second stage of scientific growth, the elaboration of the information received from the level D, may be confidently situated on the levels B and C. In practice as well as in theory, this stage may be split up into two phases, the phase of research, which consists in collecting the evidence (level B), and the phase of formulation, which consists in analyzing, classifying and interpreting the results (level C). In practice, of course, this stage is incident to particular circumstances and to the use of instruments, equipment, laboratories, etc. Its theoretical description has to be restricted to its cultural aspects.

The phase of research is characterized by the interrogative attitude of the scientist who collects the evidence. However reliable his hypothesis may be, he must suspend judgment until the results are known and conduct his research as though he were completely ignorant of its object, in order to avoid any subjective interference. He is not allowed to impose any rational scheme on his object until his object has been duly classified according to the logical principles of identity and relation, in other words his research must be rational in its means, not in its objects: he must even assume that his research may not yield any useful results at all. "Useful," in this context, has of course a very precise meaning: is useful what strengthens a hypothesis or lends itself to a rational analysis. The hypothesis or the rational means of research must be sufficiently unobtrusive to require from the object nothing more than its being involved in a scientific language situation, thus adhering only to the principles of identity and relation. The interrogation and expectation of research is therefore limited by the bare requirements of the rational means of

investigation: no other meaning is expected to result from it other than a purely intellectual and rational one. This is another difference between it and the arts of expression, where "meaning" has much wider and richer implications. The scientist is right in being suspicious about metaphysical and religious inferences or interpretations of science, but his ingrained habit of passing through the interrogative phase with the abolition of all but rational presumptions, often blinds him to the other forms of knowledge.

c) After the phase of research is completed, the results must be analyzed, classified and interpreted (level C). It is in the phase of structural elaboration that the rough information is described in a scientific language. The main function of scientific language consists in presenting information in a rational order: it is more than a style of representation or figuration, for the language used must not only be rational in itself, but must refer to facts which are made to participate in that rationality. In other words, reason, which in the phase of research acted only on the means of research, acts, in the phase of elaboration, both on the linguistic (C) and on the objective (D) levels in such a way that the rational formulation corresponds with causal relationships. This double activity is of a high cultural value insofar as it successfully raises the object of science to a relational level. Whatever its form, particulars, and circumstances may be, scientific formulation has a double aspect, rational and referential, even in the case of pure geometry, and its adequacy must be clearly judged according to the double criterion of internal (syntactic) consistency and external relevance. From this we infer that the growth of science is not simply a matter either of increasing rationality or of a gradual extension of knowledge, but a combination of both, which can be succinctly represented by the following figure:

Figure 27
Scientific Growth



SCIENTIFIC EVOLUTION

In our simplified theoretical account of the cultural aspects offered by scientific growth, we deliberately set aside one of the most important factors of scientific progress: the ability of science to correct itself by verifying and modifying the hypotheses upon which it is based in all the stages and phases of its development. The term "evolution" does not correspond very adequately with this ability, partly because of its association with biological evolution. Nor would "advance" or "progress" exactly do, for they usually refer to an irreversible movement. The historical development of science is much too complex to be encompassed by one word. At least one preliminary statement can be made at this point; namely that the possibility of self-correction by means of verifying hypotheses and modifying conceptions results in an alternative movement.

The movement of growth, in the first place, is not quite a straight one, as it has to pass through phases of active research and formulation where decisions have to be taken and where unforeseen things may happen. The movement of growth, as we have shown, theoretically passes through the following levels: A, D, B, C, D1: its line alternates.

The movement of scientific evolution alternates in a more radical way, for it is based on self-correction, that is, on an oscillation up and down all levels.

To be more concrete, we must add that practical research on level B, though it may depend to a large extent on economic, political and financial factors, has been observed to yield statistically predictable results in recent years and may be regarded as an element of constant growth: research workers are not generally treated by universities, states and industry as geniuses, but rather as competent people whose efficiency—in certain cases even productivity—can be measured in terms of results. In certain fields teamwork seems to have replaced the solitary and disinterested effort of the lonely genius, in spite of the hero-worship which still clings to any type of scientific activity.

Practical research, however, also depends on purely cultural factors, thanks to which science has the power, not only to grow, but to shift its points of view and modify its perspectives. In other words, science implies, like art, a creative activity which must be situated on the level A1, in spite of the fact that the one and only aim of science is to describe its objects as accurately and rationally as possible. There is more than one analogy between historical developments in the sciences and the arts. For instance, it would be wrong to suppose that the arts do not have to shift their points of view, perspectives, and methods in the course of time. As an example, the historical development of Egyptian and Greek sculpture

is marked by a growing precision in the technique of figuration, and the same can be said of painting since Giotto. Perspective in painting acted like a scientific discovery, and the technique of impressionism had an element of novelty which was not recognized immediately.

Nor should it be supposed that science has a monopoly on progress. The whole period of scientific stagnation which extended from the downfall of Greece to the end of the Middle Ages was not devoid of an artistic creativity which may very well be argued to have given birth to modern science, and there is no reason to suppose that science, in spite of the present speed of its growth and in spite of its leading position, will not decay once more and need the creative support of the arts. Some signs of decay seem to multiply themselves, for instance, the publicity and hero-worship expended on heart transplants does not say much in favor of a healthy condition of science, but of sensation-making surgery.

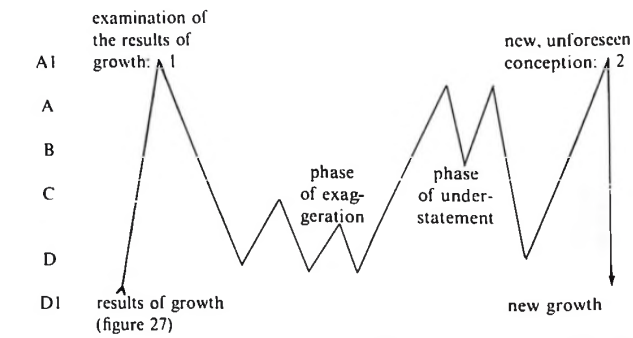
Novelty at all costs, in science as well as in art, can be artificially maintained by two means: by overstating and by understating it. Novelty breeds saturation, which is compensated for either by exaggeration (examples: baroque art or scientific glamor) or by understatement (examples: hermetic poetry or abstruse mathematical equations). In the long run, however, the only means of compensating decay is a new creative revolution, in art as well as in science, with this fundamental difference: that works of art must keep their characteristics of uniqueness, whereas the work of science must be universal and impersonal.

Historically as well as in theory, science is as much subject to decay as art. For its historical evolution to be continuous it needs a series of creative revolutions which cannot be described as merely rational processes, and which constitute the unpredictable element of creativity, to be accounted for by the theory of culture as a metalanguage.

In order to present an appropriate figuration of this element of creativity, we situate it, in figure 28, twice on level A1, thus indicating that an examination of the results of scientific growth (in 1) can lead, by means of an alternating movement engendered by shifting points of view (represented by the broken lines between 1 and 2) to a new, unforeseen conception, after which the same movement of growth, as in figure 27, can be started again.

Because scientific methods are analytical, however, the shifting of points of view effected in A1 will always result in emphasizing different aspects of reality, which will never be seen in its totality, even if novelty consists precisely in coordinating two or several points of view. In this respect the limitations of science are stricter than those of the arts, which are not confined to a rational line of development, and whose points of view are not merely analytical, but embrace, instead of objects, totalities where subjective and objective components are inseparable.

Figure 28
Scientific Evolution



The only explanation for scientific creativity which can be offered theoretically is that the points of view situated on the level A1, by making their object of the concepts situated on the level A, are free to act upon them and rationally determine them: this follows exclusively from the situation of points of view and concepts on the scientific language situation. But the historical explanation, as we hope we have demonstrated, offers strong complementary evidence: scientific evolution is not simply a matter of increasing precision of the descriptive activities, but also results from the application of unforeseeable conceptions which require ever new kinds of precision.

Thus, the mathematical symbols used in physics have a tendency to become more and more abstruse in proportion as they penetrate more and more subtle arcana of matter, but at the same time the point of view from which they are seen must be shifted, for it appears that, in spite of their increasing precision, the reality which they tend to approach becomes more elusive: the physicist who realizes that this strange phenomenon is happening has reached the point where he sees them as what they are: the components of a cultural language situation, and not mere signs as substitutes for objective reality.

Certain physicists have even developed a tendency to consider their symbols, calculations, and any type of representation as purely hypothetical and linguistic structures which are valid insofar as they are applicable, but which do not in themselves represent, replace, or describe anything beyond their own consistency and inventive power. We hear of their achievements without being able to follow them, and in order to commu-

nicate their results to the nonspecialists they have to give simplified explanations, in which they do not believe. When the language of a science becomes so abstruse, its analogy with hermetic poetry becomes evident. In hermetic poetry, nothing is named or explicitly mentioned: the reader (a listener is out of question in this case) has to make the effort of deciphering, finding for himself, and imagining the experience upon which the poem is based. In contemporary physics we have a similar case of understatement: the whole effort of understanding is implied by such formulation of research as does not make any statement as to its origins, presuppositions and ultimate destination.

When the very language of science becomes an obstacle to universal communication, the time may come for a new evaluation of experience, for the adoption of a new point of view which places experience in a new perspective and for a unifying and transmissible conception. Finally, when scientific research moils over its precision and its applications without bringing new conceptions or shifting points of view, the danger point of dryness and automatism may be said to have been reached: there is no longer any human creativity at work, no human control and responsibility, and consequently the science itself loses its cultural value, for it loses its foothold in human curiosity.

The main contribution of science to culture should therefore not be sought in the adequacy and precision of its descriptive methods or in its resulting ability to reproduce the processes of natural phenomena, thus creating a new environment by applying itself to a great variety of technical and industrial processes, but in its self-correcting and creative ability, which situates the whole evolution of the sciences in a perspective of human responsibility, where the motivation, direction, and purposes of research are well under control.

CHAPTER 8

Derived Forms of Culture

THE THEORY OF DERIVATION

Based on the historical divergence between the two main language situations, the expressive and the descriptive one, our theory of culture has so far given little account of cultural differentiation, both inside the main forms of culture, and in subsidiary, secondary, marginal, mixed, or interdependent forms of culture. The reason for this omission is that we have assumed from the start that all forms of culture are related in such a way that they constitute altogether one single culture. It follows from this conventional hypothesis that all fields and forms of culture can be historically and theoretically derived from the two basic language situations.

The expressive and descriptive language situations—to borrow an image from musical composition—are like the themes of culture: we shall now study its variations. A language situation is like a keyboard with infinite possibilities; the same theme played on it can be developed in many styles and moods, but all variations are derived from it and obey the rule of finally reverting to it.

For the study of cultural differentiation we shall apply our usual method of setting the derived forms of culture in their own language situations and comparing them to one another, as well as to both original types. As a result we shall apply purely structural criteria of derivation, so that the cultural forms will not be judged according to their importance, functions or aims, but according to their own internal structure and its significance for the whole field of culture. Internal organization and coherence are the only criteria which our theory has been able to apply so far, but in the continuation we shall have to extend them to culture as a whole.

From our point of view, the differences between the separate or autonomous forms of culture are not so important as their derivation.

that is, their relevance for culture as a whole. We shall therefore not attempt an exhaustive classification of the derived forms, but we propose to choose some representative forms of culture—representative in the sense that both their individual structure and their derivation are typical. Once a sufficient number of representative forms has been set in the appropriate language situation, an attempt at formulating a general theory of derivation can be made.

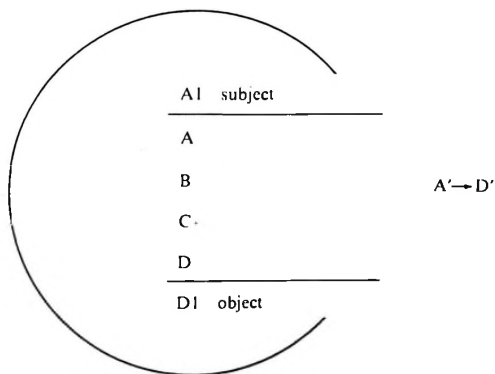
Before we proceed to the study of derived forms of culture, however, a preliminary choice must be made as to the order in which they are to be considered. The most reasonable one will be in accordance with the line followed so far: we intend to take first the forms derived from expression; in the second place, those derived from description, if the interference of mixed forms does not force us to make too many cross-references.

RELIGION AND MYSTICISM

Insofar as it can be considered an expressive form of culture, religion may be described as the most intensively relational type of expression, so intensively relational, indeed, that the subjective and objective components of expression (A1 and D1 levels) have a tendency to merge:

Figure 29

Merging of Subjective and Objective Components in Religion



In a religious language situation, God is at the same time subject and object, and whatever distinction is left amounts to a difference in point of view. As a consequence of merging the extreme levels, the magical circle

which we find in artistic culture is reversed and the limits and thresholds (marked by the straight lines) are internalized: they are encircled by the expressive movement instead of encircling it, as is the case with all other expressive language situations.

It is a language situation with an internal language situation trying to connect itself with a transcendental subject-object. This subject-object, God, is beyond any separate and definable identity and beyond any object which can be referred to.

The subject-object distinction must be made exclusively with reference to the internal language situation (levels ABCD), where the transcendental identity on the A1 level takes on the aspect of the Holy Spirit; its incarnation in the internal language situation on the levels ABCD becomes the Word, and its objective impact on the level D1 is traditionally identified with the Father. Thus the linguistic reasons for the theological doctrine of the Holy Trinity become evident.

It becomes evident also why orthodox theology (the metalanguage of religion) often warns against the dangers of uncontrolled mysticism: though reversed, the limit and the threshold are nevertheless there; in other words, they suppose an identity unassumable and an object unseizable by any individual; when a mystic tends to identify *himself* with the transcendental subject-object, he is likely to cross the threshold of orthodoxy.

In its undifferentiated manifestations, (undifferentiated in the sense of not committed to a particular creed), religious experience arises from questions about the sense of human destiny and from the craving for a meaningful life (A levels); this questioning orients the individual and his experience (B, C and D levels) toward the life-giving and meaning-bestowing God (D1 level), but this static situation is not cultural in itself, though it may serve as a basis for religious culture. For this situation to be transformed into a movement and thus to become cultural, the basic religious experience must cross the existential threshold to engage in expressive movements.

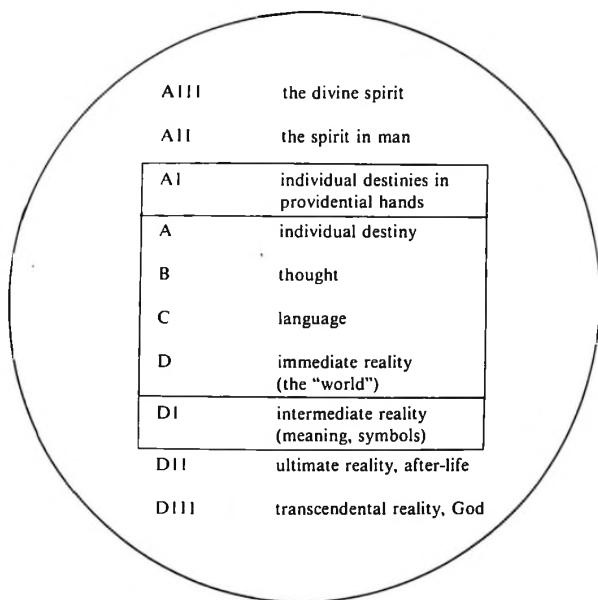
If we examine the expressive movements of religious experience, however, we find that they are arrested by the reversed limit and threshold. There may be both circular and spiral movements inside the internal language situation (ABCD), but they cannot extend any further toward the all-inclusive circle, where the circular movement is so intense and so autonomous that its polarity can be distinguished, as we have seen, only from the point of view of the internal language situation.

We see in this blockage of movement the reason why, historically, religious culture develops so slowly and, once established, has a tendency to become stable, fixed, and dogmatic, however vivid the religious experience it is based upon. A religious revolution like the Reformation

started a new movement in laying the emphasis on the Scriptures (Calvin, Bèze, Farel, using the French, Luther, the German vernacular), but this movement, though often revived since, was also arrested, and Bossuet, who one century later used movement (the denominational splitting) as an argument against Protestantism in his *Variations des Eglises protestantes*, has been amply refuted by two more centuries.

Nevertheless, if we assume that spiral expressive movements, however weak they may be, connect the various levels of the religious language situation, a more continuous model can be obtained:

Figure 30
Religious Levels



By introducing intermediate levels (A1, AII, D1 and DII) in this more differentiated religious language situation, we suggest how the internal language situation can be related by stages with the all-embracing circle.

A type of religious culture which conforms to this model is capable of generating spiral movements, thus creating a living culture.

Two consequences can be drawn from this model. A theology, according to which the D levels are the only ones worth considering, would be inhuman. A theology according to which the D levels are paired with the corresponding A levels (following a circular movement) could not be dogmatic, for it would allow for human creativity.

In pure mysticism, however, there is no intermediary level: communion takes place with the extreme levels AIII and DIII, without making any real distinction between them, as the internal language situation (ABCD) is switched off; as a consequence, such an experience cannot be expressed: it is ineffable, and as such falls out of the cultural field.

There is, however, another kind of mysticism, which we may call literary mysticism, because it finds its most notable expression in writing (Meister Eckhart, Saint Theresa, Saint John of the Cross, Fénelon, Myzkievitz) of the highest literary quality. Literary mysticism can be defined as religious experience transposed in words, but it is not just any type of religious experience, and not the usual type of expressive language, since it aims at communion beyond words: it finds expression in images (on the B and C levels), but only as springboards for successive expressive (spiral and circular) movements (BA, CD, AAI, DD1, AIAII, D1D11, AIIAIII, D11D111), thus building successive layers of meaning.

In both kinds of mysticism, however, the relation between the A levels and the D levels raises the same problem: how can the A levels actively merge into the D levels in the mystical union if there is no place for human initiative—that is, if they participate in the union in a passive way? This difficulty has been the cause of much criticism on purely theological grounds. From our point of view the problem is not insoluble, insofar as, in the case of pure mysticism, the internal language situation is completely switched off, or when, in the case of literary mysticism, the creative elements on the A levels are identified with their objects on the D levels. But this identification creates an ambiguous language situation, one that is twisted or falsified to the point of mistaking the objective and subjective components.

Whether this identification is taken for a fact of experience or not, all theologians will agree that a peculiar kind of transfer or displacement must take place for any type of mystical union not to look like a linguistic hoax: the A levels must transfer whole or part of their initiative to the D level, while maintaining a state of open and passive vacuity: the literary mystic or the esoteric writer must express himself as if his words were dictated by a supernal power. There is much in this “as if” that is open to question.

How far this displacement can take place in the case of literary mysticism depends entirely on the particular language situation on the B and C levels, that is, on the quality and function of images: from our point of view, a complete transfer would be an illusion.

Our examination of the cultural aspects of religion, in spite of its theoretical barrenness, may at least serve to fight two fallacies. The first one is the opinion that religion is outside culture. We maintain, on the contrary, that religion is perhaps the most intensive form of culture, in that it is the most powerful and universal means of ascending from an existential to a relational level. Religious experience, though not cultural in itself, implies an initiation to a new life, in the case of Christianity, to a life in Christ. Even if it is based on betting, as demonstrated by Pascal, the faith of otherwise uncultivated persons elevates their life to a cultural level, however unverifiable and inexpressive their assumptions may be. The only danger and disadvantage of this type of culture is that it is not necessarily related to the other types of culture.

The second fallacy which our theory may contribute to remove is the presumptuous conception of religion as situated beyond and above culture. This conception prevailed in the Middle Ages, with the results that we know, but it is a diehard conception, which is likely to be revived, and which was actually revived in the 19th century in the course of the controversies around Auguste Comte's positivism, Spencer's *First Principles*, and Darwin's *Origin of Species*. The origin of these controversies is to be found in an antagonism between science and religion which is detrimental to both when the scientist verifies the unverifiable, and when faith is not in good faith or has a bad conscience.

ONTOLOGY

It has long been recognized that there is no such thing as a scientific ontology or a science of being, though philosophers will go on asking the question: "What is?" Like religion, ontology arises from an interrogative attitude which is part of common human experience and as such cannot be done away with, however unscientific it may be. It is not surprising that the major works of the present century in the field of ontology, Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (SCM Press, London, 1962) and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (Philosophical Library, New York, 1956) coincide with the movement called existentialism and with an original and new subjective evaluation of human experience. "Subjective," in this context, does not mean unscientific (Sartre's subtitle is "An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology"), but it means that subjective experience is considered as an object worth studying.

This original conception has far-reaching consequences, for it has a bearing, as we shall demonstrate, on all cultural activities which cannot be classified as either purely expressive or purely descriptive, and even on such a purely expressive¹ art as music which, insofar as it constitutes a rhythmical and joyful form or state of being, has ontological value. The original contribution of modern ontology to the theory of culture is that it clarifies a notion which we have already used when referring to mysticism: the notion of "transfer" or displacement of levels, which we are now in a position to formulate more precisely. Modern ontology made the decisive step of submitting the subjective experience of life to a thorough examination; the significance of this step, from our point of view, is that it clarifies the structure of a certain number of cultural forms, including those descriptive sciences (mainly the social sciences and the humanities) which transfer elements of subjective experience on the objective levels of their respective language situations.

A transfer is not a novelty in itself, for it has always taken place in the oldest cultural activities, like history, pedagogy and jurisprudence, but we live in a scientific age, and the recognition that several important forms of culture are characterized by a transfer is bound to modify our whole conception of culture. Signs of change are already apparent in the arts as well as in the sciences concerned: a growing awareness of their interdependence. It would not be difficult to give examples of this recent change, but we are rather concerned here with its historical context: we realize that the growing awareness of the fact that age-old cultural activities have always operated a transfer runs parallel with a growing awareness of the fact that philosophy has ceased to be the mother of science since the sixteenth century, that is, since the split between the expressive and the descriptive forms of culture took place.

If philosophy is no longer "scientific," and admits the fact, this means that all sciences will have to reassess their cultural value and in particular clarify the notion and methods of transfer, for the deliberate displacement of levels operated by modern ontology shows how to bridge the gap between the expressive and the descriptive forms of culture. Our conception of culture as an indivisible whole forces us to found the description of all subsequent forms of culture upon the key notion of transfer.

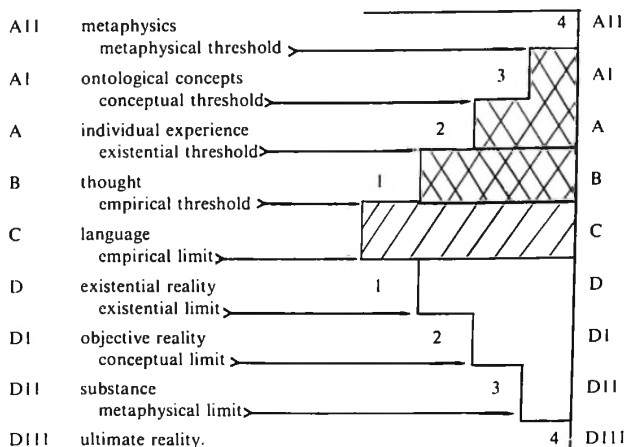
The language situation of ontology, as we figure it in the following figure, is based on the assumption that there is a transfer of the shaded area shown in Figure 31.

The numbers in this figure do not represent successive ontological

¹Technical innovations, however, play an important part in the history of music.

Figure 31

Ontology



stages but varieties and possibilities of the ontological language situation. We shall concentrate first on the variety number three, which corresponds more or less with the ontological attitude of the existentialists.

The metaphysics and ontological concepts implied by their attitude (levels AII and AI) are separated from their object by the conceptual threshold which isolates them from the existential level of individual experience (level A) and thus enables them to take an objective distance from the phenomena of existence. But this level A—their object—is not situated on the objective levels (the D levels): it must therefore be transferred beyond the linguistic levels (the B and C levels) and reported on the corresponding objective levels, level D (existential reality) being thus covered with level B (thought), and level DI (objective reality) with level A (individual experience): it is not difficult to see why the transfer operated by the existentialists culminated in a dramatic conception which found expression in Sartre's drama. The corresponding levels clash, for there is a natural antagonism between existential reality and thought on the one hand, and still more between objective reality and individual

experience on the other hand. Objective reality is "otherness" with respect to individual experience.²

This clash had another result which is more interesting from our point of view: it heightened the sense that the awareness of transfers is necessary for an understanding of existence in a modern context, and that it has become indispensable to dive into the subjective components of reality. By deliberately projecting the existential levels on the objective levels, the existentialists have opened the way for a new form of expression: expression in the midst of the descriptive forms of culture. Let us hope that this opening will serve to humanize the sciences and redress the balance by at least allowing the humanities to have a say in those forms of culture where a transfer takes place.

We shall now concentrate on the variety number 1, which corresponds more or less with the ontological attitude of the empiricists. The metaphysics, ontological concepts, individual experience and thought (levels AII, AI, A and B) implied by their attitude (in fact some of them maintain that they have no preconceptions) are separated from their object only by the level of language (C), which stands immediately between the empirical threshold and limit. This is a very abnormal language situation, in that its linguistic levels are separated by a threshold, and this entails, in particular, that the purely linguistic components are likely to be regarded with suspicion and will not be allowed to interfere. Some empiricists have indeed developed an almost morbid suspicion toward anything that is determined by linguistic factors (like metaphysics). An analogous suspicion is that of the structural linguists, who reject anything redolent of "psychologism."

The deliberate exclusion of the linguistic elements may be a technical condition for a certain kind of empirical investigation, but it is an ontological absurdity. It is not surprising that British empiricism, in the course of its historical development, should have focused upon the

² Because the very foundations of his philosophy led him into emphasizing the clash between the real and the imaginary, Sartre was able to make the following statement, which sums up his psychology of the imagination: "Beauty is a value applicable only to the imaginary and which means the negation of the world in its essential structure." (*The Psychology of the Imagination*, Citadel Press, New York, 1965, p. 281). The whole effort in this book consists in cutting all threads between the real and the imaginary: no wonder that Sartre was proclaimed Enemy Number One of the poets. On this point, of course, we have to contradict Sartre all the more confidently, because our approach has a definitely more complete foundation: Sartre totally neglects the linguistic levels which, in the case of the poetic imagination, do connect the real with the imaginary, as we have sufficiently demonstrated. We may even add that the imaginary is, in a way, doubly real, since it involves both an objective reference and an expressive projection of the subject, and here we doubly contradict Sartre, who is not wrong in his most astute book, but acrobatically skips over this shaded area.

doctrine of the *tabula rasa*: there is no other way of excluding the linguistic factors than by declaring that the mind is empty.

Any sound ontology, however, because it supposes a language situation, includes some linguistic factors: things are not what they are, but what they are said to be or—to express it more convincingly—the answer to the question “What is?” depends on what is said about what is: it is a statement, and a statement is a form of language. Modern ontology, which has made the decisive step of recognizing the doubly shaded area (see figure 31), is still inhibited by its very nature with respect to the one-way shaded area.

Another lesson can be drawn from the preceding figure. The extreme displacement of the thresholds (from empiricism:1 to metaphysics:4) and of the limits, shows how impossible it is to found a scientific ontology, that is, a purely descriptive science of being, without the help of transfers. This will be so as long as language remains the medium, and there is no reason to suppose that another medium can be found. A transfer, however, involves an expressive movement which does not exactly correspond with those studied so far: we have to examine each particular kind of transfer separately.

To conclude: the worst ontological fallacy consists in making a statement about what is without taking account of its being a statement.

HISTORY

For the Greeks, Clio was the Muse of History: we tend to forget this fact in proportion as new scientific conceptions besiege, one after the other, the fortress of Clio, whose inner precincts are still undamaged. In particular the myth of scientific history, created in the past century, has some hard-headed adherents, in spite of its repeated failures, but they are not likely to be the top historians, who know how much artistic talent goes into the science of history.

In order to account for the fact that history is both an art and a science, we set up the following in Figure 32.

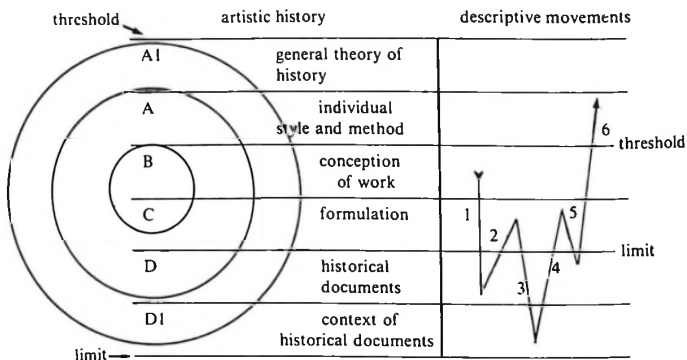
This figure represents a mixed language situation, one in which the circular movements are of an expressive nature, whereas the spiral movements are replaced by a descriptive alternation.

History is an art, not only because, as a result of the irreducible complexity of the subject matter, the historian must have his own conceptions, methods, and style, but also because of the subjective components of his object: he must account for unpredictable as well as predictable human actions.

History is a science, not only because it must be based on fact and must maintain throughout an objective language situation, but also because

Figure 32

History



historical facts must be both chronologically and rationally ordered, though there are many conceptions, kinds, and degrees of rational explanation (not to mention the irrational and eschatological kinds.)

When Tacitus describes the character of Nero's mother, Agrippina, he does so as a psychologist, and above all as an artist: the expressive movement is undeniable, and yet his way of depicting the character cannot be identified with dramatic fiction. This example shows that the kind of artistic talent required of a historian consists in an imaginative reconstruction of events: it is not purely expressive, because the object of history stands by itself and cannot be attracted inside a magical circle. Certain historical works have a lasting value, but historical time flows on.

The descriptive movements can be theoretically articulated as follows:

1. collection and examination of the documents;
2. presentation of the documents;
3. investigation of the context of historical documents;
4. elaboration of the context in accordance with the conception of the work;
5. interpretation of the context;
6. incidence of the foregoing on a general theory of history.

To sum up, history is neither purely descriptive nor purely expressive, but is characterized by a transfer of a particular kind which may be defined as a more or less adequate projection on historical facts of the historian's method, style and general conception. A reliable sign of this

transfer is that we can trace the characteristic thresholds and limits of both the expressive and the descriptive language situations (see figure).

LINGUISTICS

It goes without saying that the kind of transfer operated by any study of language is quite obvious and consists simply in placing language in the situation of an object, more precisely, in transferring language from the C to the D levels. The first condition for linguistics is therefore a sufficient distance between the observer and the facts of language for the latter to appear as objects. Another consequence of this transfer is that linguistics seems to conform to the definition of a metalanguage—but is it a science?

Here we are faced with the same kind of difficulty as in the case of history. Derived from the art of rhetoric (highly developed in antiquity) and from the philology of the nineteenth century, linguistics has only recently become a scientific endeavor, but this could happen only at the cost of cutting language from vital parts of its context; one of them is the “psychologism” which some structuralists try to exclude.

The possibilities of a scientific description of language are much more reduced than was expected, not simply because language resists the transfer, but above all because, if a structure (with a deep structure), it is a living structure which can hardly be separated from its organic context, and the very fact that the object of the metalanguage is precisely language, makes it impossible to avoid any movement of expression and projection.

Besides, in spite of their descriptive efforts, structural and transformational grammar retain much of the normative and pedagogic character which seems inseparable from the notion of grammar. Though there is much progress in lexicology, syntax, semiology, semantics, diachronic and synchronic linguistics, etc., the facts of language seem to eschew a strictly rational approach, though the deeply rational structure of language cannot be denied. De Saussure was a pioneer not so much because he made the distinction between “*langue*” and “*parole*” than because he extended the field of linguistics to the contextual and affective components of language.

In view of the divergences among the linguistic schools and of the inchoative situation of the scientific approach, we present below the barest description of the transfer operated in linguistics: it goes without saying that this description will have to be completed and specified.

PSYCHOLOGY

A similar kind of transfer takes place in psychology, with this difference: that the subjective A levels are transferred to the same D levels as in the case of linguistics. Similar remarks could also be made as to the evolution

Figure 33

Linguistics

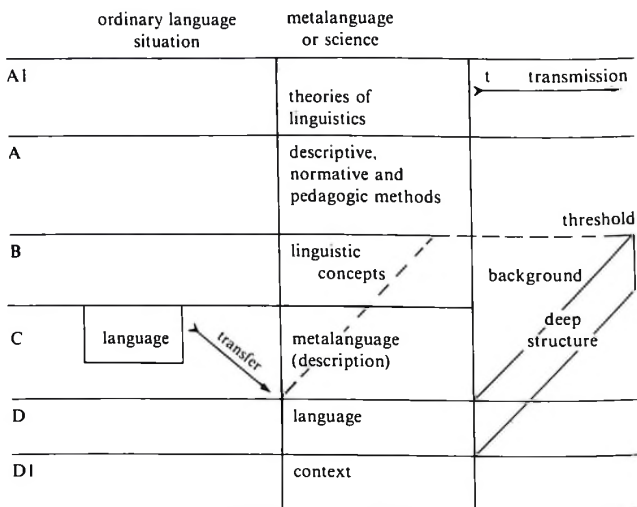
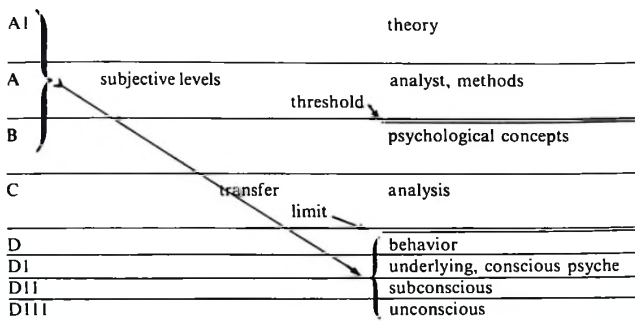


Figure 34

Psychology



of psychology from an art to a science, with an emphasis on the difficulty of isolating psychological facts.

In the following figure we have placed behavior immediately below the limit in order to emphasize the objective aspects of behavior, and this level is followed by the successive layers of Freudian and Jungian psychology.

The difficulties of objectivation are nowhere so acute as in psychology, for the transfer consists precisely in making an object of what is essentially a subject. The necessity of self-knowledge, however, need not be demonstrated, and in certain morbid cases a transfer may have a therapeutic effect. This possibility is used in particular by psychoanalysis, where the therapeutic transfer can be represented as follows:

Figure 35
Psychoanalysis

	morbid language situation		therapeutic language situation (inverted l.s.)
A1	repressed unconscious		contact with reality
A	repressed subconscious		personality recovered
B	repressive conscious thought	transfer	organized conscious thought
C	inhibited conversation		uninhibited conversation
D	blocked		uninhibited subconscious
D1	blocked		uninhibited unconscious

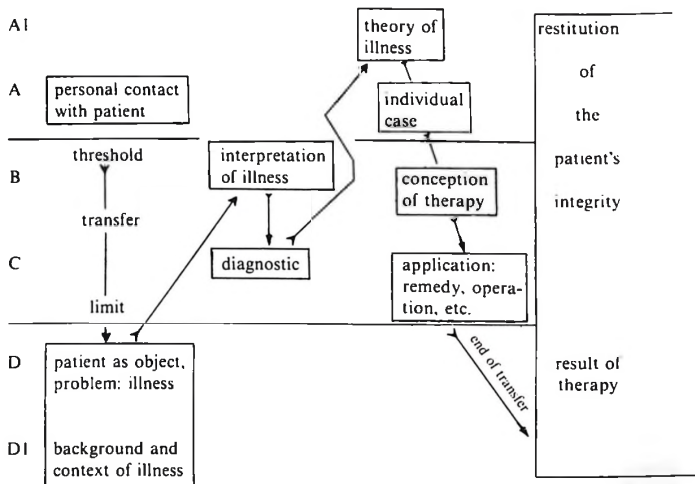
MEDICINE

The therapeutic effect of the transfer operated in psychoanalysis brings us naturally to the theme of medical therapy, where the transfer is not fundamentally psychological, but consists in making an object out of the patient and his illness; in other words, it is an active or transitive kind of transfer, whereby the person involved in the medical language situation as an object is not to be released from this situation before he has recovered from his illness or, if there is no recovery, before the treatment is completed or abandoned.

Medicine deals with persons, and therefore requires not only the knowledge of illnesses and of their treatment, but also the understanding of what a person in healthy condition needs: it has long been considered by the practitioners themselves as an art, not in the sense that it is expressive, but in the sense that its conceptions, methods and techniques involve a more than rational way of approaching, treating and understanding human beings.

Besides, medical practice—as distinct from the medical sciences—has to do with persons and consequently cannot be only analytical: individual doctors have their style and much depends on the way they express themselves. In our description of the medical language situation, however, we shall neglect this expressive aspect of medical practice in order to emphasize the transitive transfer:

Figure 36
Medicine (Transitive or Therapeutic Transfer)



PEDAGOGY

The methods of education have never been considered as either descriptive or expressive, though the term "science of education" seems to make its way. The reason for this uncertainty seems to lie in the fact that the

language situation of education is a double one and consists fundamentally in a dialogue between two identities, the *magister* and the *discipulus*.

The pedagogic methods and conceptions have also considerably varied in the course of time, though two main traditions can be discerned. The first one is concerned with the ritual, formal, and informative aspects of education, and its pedagogic method is characterized by repeating and learning by heart the teacher's wording. This is, according to Jérôme Carcopino, the way education was conceived of by the Romans, but there are many examples of this type of pedagogy in our time.

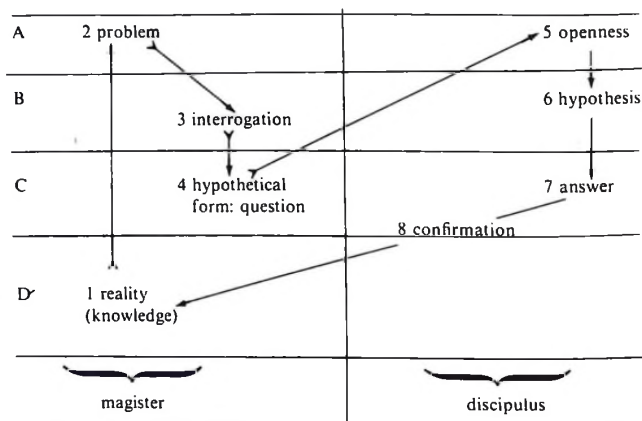
The second tradition seems to originate in Socrates' maieutic or intellectual midwifery, which consisted in bringing into consciousness conceptions previously latent in the pupil's mind. The Socratic method is most interesting from our point of view, for it does not simply involve a transmission of the formal and informational components of education, but is accompanied by a transfer of the levels of consciousness, by means of interrogation, in such a way that what is positively known by the teacher is expressed in the interrogative form, to be transformed by the pupil in an affirmative answer. The maieutic method consists in asking questions so as to train the pupil to educate himself. Continued by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Emile*), Pestalozzi, and Madame Montessori, this tradition comes to a culminating point in the present day in Ferdinand Gonseth's theory of the heuristic situation, in which the pupil is maintained in a state of openness which favors autonomous research, and is led only by means of questions. The heuristic transfer does not imply, like the maieutic method, the pre-existence of latent or innate ideas, and the corresponding transfer from a subconscious to a conscious psychological level, but it similarly passes from the affirmative to the interrogative and back to the affirmative form; these successive transitions are marked by the formulation and confirmation of hypotheses.

The cycle of heuristic pedagogy can be represented as follows in Figure 37.

JURISPRUDENCE

In dealing with religion, grammar and pedagogy, we meet a form of culture which is generally associated with ethics but which is distinct from moral principles: the norm. When we say, for example, that there is a normative grammar, we mean that there is a set of conventionally established and accepted rules. The transfer operated by a norm—grammatical, ethical or legal—supposes two partners: the norm or convention, and the people subjected to the norm. The strength of a norm further requires a reciprocal transfer, in the sense that the people subjected to the norm do not submit without being made to understand that they participate in a convention whereby their will is transferred.

Figure 37
Pedagogy (Heuristic Transfer)

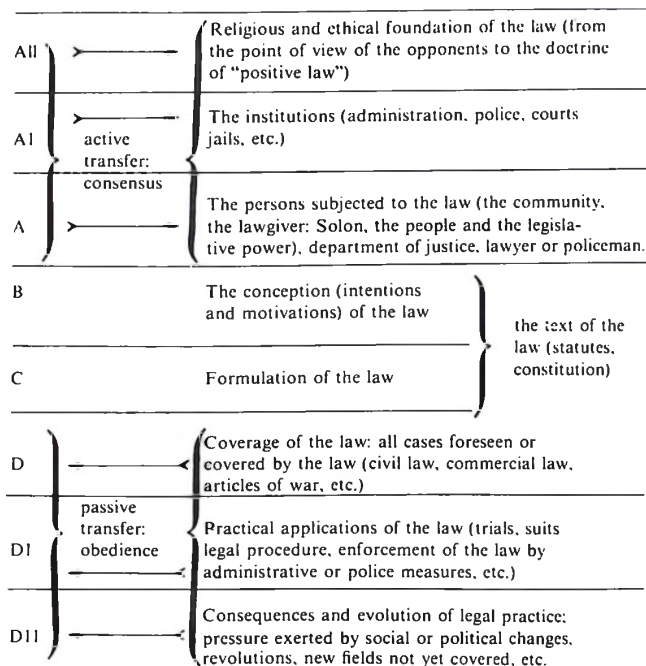


Thus the normative transfer is both active or transitive, and passive, in that it implies consensus and an obedience to the norm resulting from the consensus.

The norm of jurisprudence is the law. In itself the law is neither expressive nor descriptive (though it supposes the expression and description of a will), but consists in a reciprocal transfer of will which regulates social relationships. Consequently, the language situation of jurisprudence appears as a succession of static layers in the sense that there is no expressive or descriptive movement, but a reciprocal transfer of parallel layers.

The various layers are not only detached from each other (in the sense of being in a fixed or normative relationship), but also from their backgrounds, which they simply cover, without modifying them or being modified by them. The law is a convention, a text or a tacit agreement, which sets invariable norms on all levels. These norms do not represent anything or express anyone's will beyond an agreement on and a common recognition of the same things by the same partners: they have no expressive or scientific value, but a powerful and efficient consensus value. They aim at holding a society together by creating as wide and voluntary as possible a consensus, so that the law has a margin of disagreement for a threshold and a fringe of coverage for a limit.

Figure 38
Jurisprudence



SOCIAL SCIENCES

If, under this title, we include such fields as sociology, political science, economics and business administration, we realize that they cover such a vast field of human activity and social organization that they can hardly constitute pure, autonomous or exact sciences, though each of these fields has acquired a relatively recent autonomy. Besides, none of them has any expressive tendency, though all are derived from history and occupy grounds previously covered by literature (for instance sociology occupies the ground formerly held by the satire or the social novel).

Though all these fields have wide social implications, and consequently

imply social commitments, they have a tendency to give priority to their scientific development. This statement is particularly adequate in the case of economics, where we recognize the following descriptive language situation:

Figure 39

Economics

A I	theory and history of economics
A	method and style
B ↗ threshold	conception (interpretation of documents)
C — limit ↘	formulation (descriptive language)
D	documents (statistics, periodicals, legislation, etc.)
D I	context of documents (economic life, business, decisions and other subjective elements, investment, productivity, finance, etc.)

Economics deals with the production, consumption and exchange of goods, and in this respect can remain objectively descriptive, though its laws (the law of demand and supply, the law of diminishing returns, etc.) cannot be rigorous. As a whole, economics is sufficiently consistent to constitute a science. It includes, however, a certain number of undetermined internal factors, (decisions, strikes, economic behavior, initiative, incentives, etc.), and its borders are not tight (interdependence with history, sociology, jurisprudence, political science, ethics, psychology, etc.)

The main difficulty encountered by economics as a science, however, is the one that undermines the foundations of all the social sciences: it implies options and commitments because it deals not only with the production, distribution and consumption of goods, but also with man and society. In the case of present-day economics, the options in question are those between capitalism and communism, free market or planning, etc. These options are not scientific, but they determine the whole orientation of the science.

As a result of these options, the perspective of the social sciences must be seen from another point of view than the strictly scientific or ideological one. Society is not a static pyramid, but a system of human relationships, and consequently a form of language: the only point of view which

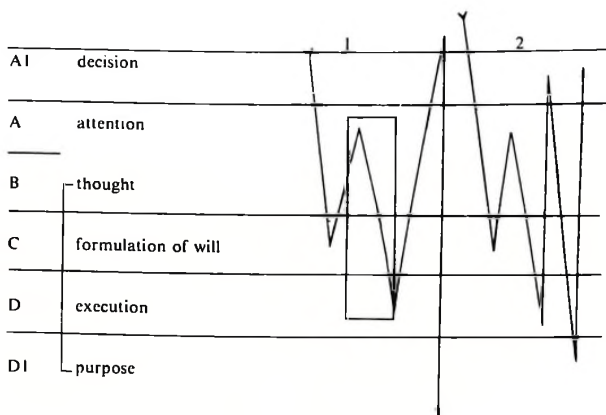
may be validly and efficiently applied is the cultural point of view. It is very difficult and dangerous to give a precise and dogmatic answer to the questions: "What is cultural, noncultural and what is anticultural?"

In order not to avoid, but to put these questions, we shall try to describe the language situation which many forms of social organization have in common. It should cover the field of human activity, from the decision to its ultimate consequences, and take account of all the possibilities of articulating this activity, that is, of all the possible forms of social organization.

The first of these language situations represents the case of a hieratic social organization in which the individual (for instance a soldier) is not involved in the process of decision-making and ascribing purposes to action. His isolation is represented by the inner rectangle.

The second language situation represents a differentiated form of social organization where many individuals participate in a continuous process and are not isolated (there is no inner rectangle).

Figure 40
Social Structures

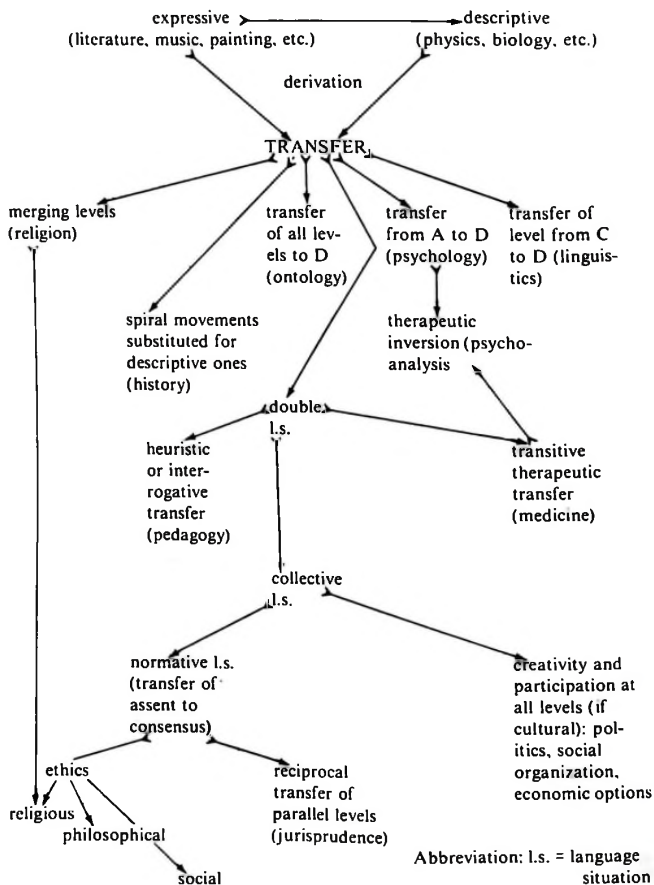


What we would like to suggest by this figure is that social organization can be satisfactory only if it corresponds with the basic cultural requirements described in this book: creativity and participation of all.

RECAPITULATION

All forms of culture which are not specifically expressive or descriptive are derived by means of the following types of transfer:

Figure 41



CONCLUSION

We have preferred a linguistic, epistemological and empirical approach to a study based on necessarily vague, arbitrary or dogmatic definitions and opinions. As a result, our book does not claim to achieve more than a description of the fundamental cultural structures and the elaboration of a practical method of research.

We suggest that our method can be fruitfully applied to university reform and to further research in special cultural fields which can be articulated in their respective language situation with more precision than has been possible in the present work.

The definition of culture which concludes our investigations can be formulated as follows: culture is the sum of all complete language situations, in which all levels are connected expressively, descriptively, or through a transfer. Our hypothesis of cultural unity has been confirmed by structural as well as by empirical (historical) analysis. The basic factors of creativity and cultural transmission prevent us from dividing or arresting culture, that is, from seeing it otherwise than as one permanently contemporary whole. Whoever fully understands one form of culture, participates in all.

We use the definite article in our title, *The Theory of Culture*, because we are confident that we have applied a global method, which takes account of the whole structure and enables a precise description of the articulation and interaction of all cultural forms. Finally, we have emphasized the fact that culture is not or should not be the monopoly of a social class, but must respond to the ineradicable need for elevating human life to the relational level.



PART FOUR

EXPERIENCE AND ITS CONTEXTS

CHAPTER 9

Preliminary Remarks

PROBLEMS OF METHOD

Insofar as culture can be considered as an object, so can it also be ascribed a rational structure. In that case it becomes relevant to ask whether culture is not purely subjective or internal, or whether it can be adequately represented by its objective or external aspects. The score of a musical composition is the final aspect of a creative effort, and constitutes the reference point of varying interpretations and the origin of unverifiable effects and influences.

The major objection to any attempt at attributing a rational pattern to culture consists in the claim that no work is ever completed, interpreted once for all, or explained. This argument boils down to repeating commonplaces on the mystery of creation. It is useless, they say, to make an object of what is purely subjective, mysterious and out of reach of any rational investigation: science should stop short at the threshold of the humanities, which should remain inviolable.

Raised by many unconditional advocates of the humanities, this objection would be convincing if the humanities were really sacred, but by devoting a cult to them, with the corresponding dogmas, they become transformed into an object and thus cannot escape investigation by skeptics, unbelievers, or even puzzled believers. Culture cannot be prevented from manifesting itself, making itself known, communicating itself, and entering processes of internal change and social action. Even if these external aspects are only the visible and objective side of a deeper reality, these aspects lend themselves to an objective and rational investigation.

As a linguistic object, culture undeniably displays verifiable structures, but we must admit that these patterns are constantly modified by each creative change and that they have an expressive significance, rather than a descriptive one: far from describing a fixed or definable object, they

transpose an internal reality onto an objective level. Cultural patterns consist in relationships between the internal world and its external manifestations. It should be possible to rationally transcribe these patterns without extrapolating, that is, by taking account of the natural correspondence between internal realities and their external manifestations. The latter can be objectively examined, but the internal realities can be perceived by intuition only, in an unverifiable way.

The transposition of cultural structures can be examined according to partly objective criteria, for in all spheres every individual has recourse to his own cultural experience, however limited it may be. This experience relies on intuitive, imaginative, and creative criteria without which the cultural patterns are empty of any corresponding internal reality. The procedure may seem arbitrary, but dryness and frustration will inevitably result from the exclusion of any personal experience from a field in which—contrary to what happens in the natural sciences—pure objectivity may close the door opened by introspection.

By facing the object and turning back to the past or inside to the self, cultural attitudes can be organized into one whole, whatever their complexity. Even if culture develops in time in an unpredictable and apparently chaotic way, it keeps in touch, at each stage of its development, with its origins and its future, so that each of its works can be referred to the same, simultaneous, or present structure. To describe this structure, one must objectively transcribe the internal model or mold with which each isolated work or culture as a whole can be compared. This general structure is, the visible, external, or objective form representing or metaphorically transposing the invisible, internal and subjective contents of culture.

To describe the external and rational forms of culture one must give up the attempt at describing mere objects, and instead press the descriptive and expressive contents of culture into the appropriate mold. This operation is all the more difficult because the mold is designed to contain things which cannot be objectively perceived or which must be subjectively experienced. The adequacy of the mold must be tested, for its truth is subjective, as if our whole life had to undergo an examination as to its style. We should not forget that we are ultimately interested only in the hidden life of culture. The aspects shown so far in the present work represent nothing objective, real, material or external, but reproduce empirically the abstract inner structure and interpret the meaning of cultural life. How challenging it is to trace the outlines of invisible contents! And yet, how can we resist the urge to mark one's passage or to give some evidence of one's self by means of a visible sign, as if what is kept separate and hidden by language could not manifest itself except by marking its imprint on what conceals and isolates it?

In a way culture acts ironically in reconsidering its own themes (expression) and objects (description), in causing them to mean what they hide and deny, in discovering what is invisible by means of opaque signs, and in suppressing things by expressing them, as if nature had to dance to the rhythm of the human heart. In fact, culture does not make the world less hostile or more harmonious, but transfigures it by linking it with human destiny. This link cannot be abolished, for it is not a transient datum, but an ungraspable, open awareness, a secret and active nonbeing.

The crucial paradox for man is to experience his threatened being by resorting to his elusive nonbeing. The only evidence that may be brought to light for this nonbeing or spirit will necessarily appear in a material form which cannot be retranslated into its nonmaterial equivalent. It looks as though this original might be ignored, since it can be perceived only in its contrary appearance. All kinds of prejudice and quackery feed on this basic ignorance and bar the way to an efficient method of cultural analysis. If only false culture could be unmasked or unrecognized values be detected!

A genuine method of cultural analysis would lead research in a direction opposite to the one in which research is conducted on a large scale: it would consist in understanding and describing culture not as an object, but as a person who leaves imponderable traces.

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE: SELF-EXPERIENCE

Informed by observation and founded on logic, descriptive research tends to reduce itself to one single and universal formula with the highest possible degree of abstraction and simplicity. However much one may consider physical and material nature to be well-determined, it is likely to be the object of other languages than the mathematical ones, which cannot cling forever to the same formulae. To the simplicity of dead abstraction are opposed the openness and infinite freedom of the mind, which cannot be reduced to any formula or be comprehended once for all, for they vanish in the elusive past and escape toward an often unconsciously projected past.

It is possible to make a partial prediction, on the basis of the two fundamental language situations, of the future structures which contemporary culture will produce. The descriptive languages are likely to adopt a structure adapted to a series of objects determined and formulated in such a way that the language will modify only its perspective, while the objects themselves will remain fixed in the same rational perspective. As to the expressive languages, they are likely to adopt a form capable of containing the infinite variety of expressed subjects.

Cultural analysis aims at investigating the direction and value of the scientific and expressive structures from the point of view of their double perspective. It aims not so much at contributing to information in a given field, but rather at placing scientific theories and artistic works in perspective. This endeavor is all the more unusual because, even in the field of the humanities, the methods of the natural sciences are more and more in favor, as though the humanities had to do with determined objects. The aim consists, therefore, in diverting attention, detaching it from objects, and focusing it on the perspective in which they appear.

Diverting attention from objects does not mean losing sight of them or keeping reality at bay. It means, rather, leaving objects to themselves and recognizing their natural existence, as if they were asking for a new life, as if nature were waiting to be worked upon. The worn-out distinction between mind and matter leads to an antagonism between nature and human artifacts. The shortcomings of our culture cause nature to appear as a strange, hostile or disagreeable object.

To the respect for objects, which the experimental method has recommended, one must add the respect for subjects, which the method of cultural analysis cannot fail to recommend. By refocusing attention, the subjective contents of the expressive and descriptive structures can be comprehended. Such contents are characterized by their entire availability and unpredictability and cannot be directly observed, except in their traces and effects. They can neither be imprisoned in a formula nor be defined or abstractly designated: they can only be expressed in a way which supposes a concrete presence and a spiritual action in harmony with nature, time and environment.

The subjective contents of cultural forms may be considered as negative entities or nonbeings only by comparison with plaster negatives: a plaster negative reproduces the reversed outline of a form without content. The cultural structures described in the preceding chapters stand only for such a bare outline: an empty form meant to contain all life. Cultural content can be evaluated only at the price of an experience committing the whole person, and this evaluation may have no other criterion than an agreement between personal experience and the cultural structures which have been described.

In order to evaluate the cultural content of a given work, one may start by drawing a diagram of the corresponding expressive, descriptive or derived language situation, and the next step may consist in investigating whether this structure, when properly understood, really gives rise to an authentic experience, that is, whether it can be substituted by actual self-experience. Even if the first operation does not result in a technically perfect drawing, it remains the basis for any communication and compre-

hension, just as any abstract diagram is always simultaneously an abstraction and that which a community of persons understands by it. A text is not just a text, though it may be treated as a material object: to understand it we must try to reconstitute in ourselves, consciously or unconsciously, the state of mind associated with the language situation. It is impossible to evaluate this state of mind without experiencing it: such is the criterion of the second operation; if the state of mind corresponding to a sufficiently understood negative form is confirmed by personal experience so as to renew and to move it, the work in question may be said to proceed from an original mind. By comparing this work with similar or related works, it may be possible to ascertain whether and in what way this work is superior, all works being compared with respect to one single scale of values, at the same time unworldly and present (because always actually experienced), which situates them in a permanent order and perspective toward which the infinite possibilities converge, the indecisions and even the negative powers of the mind and soul. This permanent order cannot be mistaken for a datum because it must be first experienced; it is made up of a multitude of original experiences which combine to form a unity: it is the primal mold of creation, the unworldly negative of all experience.

The "temperance" which Hamlet wanted the actors to beget "in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion" (Act III, scene II), the "*idée de quelque moi merveilleusement supérieur à Moi*" (Valéry, *Variété V*, p. 162), or in other words the creative form molding all possibilities, offers two aspects, one visible and one invisible. The visible aspect may be represented, for instance, by a text or a performance or a score wherein all the creative possibilities are formally fixed. The invisible or negative aspect is masked by the text, the performance or the score, the passages, episodes or notes which build up such a unity that the whole can be seen at a glance: "Telle oeuvre, par exemple, est le fruit de longs soins, et elle assemble une quantité d'essais, de reprises, d'éliminations et de choix. Elle a demandé des mois et même des années de réflexions, et elle peut supposer aussi l'expérience de toute une vie. Or, l'effet de cette oeuvre se déclarera en quelques instants." (Valéry, *Variété V*, Gallimard, 1945, p. 306).

Making a distinction between the creative act and its effect and, from another point of view, between production and consumption, Valéry maintains that the poet's and the reader's standpoints ignore each other and even seem incompatible, but he recognizes the need for certain shareable values. Even if they are opposed, the two aspects of the mold belong to the same person, the same unity, the same order. The mask is always compelling, it is the butt of criticism, but the first question that

should be asked is whether the mask can be substituted for a real face of "quelque *moi* merveilleusement supérieur à Moi"—in other terms, whether the mask has a real value of exchange.

It is sometimes superfluous to ask the question as to whether the presence of an order both immanent and transcendent, present and timeless, personal and impersonal, manifests itself and makes itself felt from the start. In that case, the "consumer" is guided by authority and is delighted: such is the effect expected by many people from their preferred works. But is it possible to certify the existence of that superior person and consequently the exchange value of the work? Are there trustworthy criteria beyond personal tastes or preferences for empty masks?

At first sight, the existence of a superior self whose presence must be experienced can hardly be demonstrated. Such at least would be the case with an ephemeral self met by chance. The identity of the superior self, however, is related to a permanent order underlying the variety of its manifestations. Like a person, this self appears in a multitude of aspects: the face (for instance the finished work), the presence (for instance the sense of participation produced by a performance, or the musical spell) and the response (the effect produced by a poem). None of these isolated aspects proves a presence, but as a whole, if they converge into the same unity, they bring enough evidence.

When the self that leaves its imprint in a work is equally reflected in whoever tries to understand this work—not so much as the unique self limited to that work than as a recognizable model beyond that work—then the superior self may be said to belong neither to the author who has signed the work, nor to the "consumers" (readers, spectators, etc.), nor to the work itself, but to the fundamental unity underlying all efforts at expression and description.

Just as the infinite possibilities of language are made possible by a generative or unifying principle, so the infinite creative occasions are offered by communion in the self that is recreated in every original work. The comic spirit, for instance, by mocking individual behavior or types, tends to evoke in the spectators the presence of the ridiculing self. A similar self can be observed behind the characters of a novel, in the transcendence and freedom without which, according to Professor Gouhier, there is no tragic spirit, and in the intimacy behind the lyrical self.

The universal self that proves the authenticity and serves to determine the value of original works of art should not be ruled out as absent from or unnecessary for descriptive culture, where virtues of integrity, objectivity, honesty and impartiality are often underlined. These virtues are assumed by the scientist and are present in his work, but neither the one nor the other could attain universal recognition if they did not give up their peculiarities in favor of an impersonal self, without which they

would be worthless. It could be argued that scientific research owes its achievement to the same "*moi* merveilleusement supérieur à *Moi*," and that the value of descriptive culture proceeds from an ascetic exchange: not from the scientists, their work and their methods, but from their self-effacement.

How can this new element or dimension—the universal, superior self—be placed in a language situation? It obviously does not belong in the scale of the degrees of awareness, A, A1, A11. Each of these degrees represents a free and active awareness which describes (A), expresses itself (A1), or observes itself (A11). The identity or the spirit corresponding to each of these degrees is determined by its own acts: it remains free, undetermined, open, and never conforms to a pre-established order. It borrows its personality from its own actions and may revoke it again; it is never fulfilled or completed, except outside itself, in this universal person whose acts confer upon it sense and value. The degrees of awareness mark the creative origin of which the universal person constitutes the achievement or the end.

As a result, the universal person must be represented as standing outside the language situation, expressive or descriptive. It could be designated by a circle involving all the degrees A11, A1, A, B, C, D, D1 and D11, designated by the letter P covering the space beyond the whole outline of the language situation. This circle would coincide with the negative form of the language situation, a universal form, in that it would include any possible language situation and would be reinstated and confirmed in its unity by any new creative effort, any new language situation, any new work.

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE: THE TRANSFER OF IDENTITY AND EXTERNAL REALITY

The expressive language situation has been represented so far as limited by a "magic circle," by means of which a work of art is somehow protected from existential time. Since only linguistic aspects were considered, no hypothesis had to be formulated concerning the fringe outside the circle, apart from the continuation of the line *t*, representing existential time. It may be added that the circle marks the limits of internal creativity and suggests the existence of vaster spheres situated outside the vicissitudes of the individual creative effort. The descriptive language situation has its own sharp outlines marking the rigorous impersonality through which communication takes place.

It has also been supposed that all language situations are simultaneously ordered in a perspective with one single focus. This general order

implied by particular language situations involves, not only various degrees of consciousness, but also the whole language situation, including the objective levels (D, D1). In spite of their autonomy, all language situations find their place and limits in an external perspective, all can be substituted for a model, all have an exchange value, however unique they may be. This value can be assessed in all their phases: conception, execution, appearance, success, reprint, etc. Whatever the destiny of a work, its value is fixed with reference to an external, rigorous, and unique perspective, and this is the same for all works. No criticism can be taken seriously if it does not refer to a verifiable perspective, no circumstantial criterion of success or opportunity can prevail against the criterion of cultural value according to which one particular work either is original or brings nothing new to the cultural whole of which it is part.

If the works which make up a culture could be considered separately, then chaos would reign, but they cannot be validly treated apart from the whole, unless we want to deprive them of any value. Though anarchic in its modes of production and consumption, culture is endowed with a well-ordered, rigorously established, and impartially democratic structure which determines the value of individual works with relation to the whole.

This structure does not depend on individual taste, preference or erudition and is not established by a group or a privileged class. It defies and defeats any attempt at possessing it, and remains external to any individual or society. Its externality or transcendence is made accessible by a kind of ascetic initiation which consists in submitting one's own experience and appreciation to an impersonal justice. There is no justice without law, and still less without a case: each musical score should be given a chance of being heard, but no listener is the ultimate judge, for the judge is above the parties.

It would seem very pretentious to formulate the laws of culture: each critic brings his prejudices into the debate, and as such remains partial. No one can see the whole, though every one judges in all circumstances. It is impossible to sketch the outlines of even vast wholes like European, Western, Chinese or Hindu culture from the inside without referring to external structures without which such wholes have no value. In other words, priority must be given to the cultural unity over cultural complexity.

The notion of externality, or transcendence, which has been added to the dimensions used so far in the present book, must be more closely examined. There is apparently nothing less external than our spontaneous appreciation of a work of art. No one seems to refer consciously to similar works or to objective criteria before he consults his own pleasure or displeasure. The undefinable character of the aesthetic pleasure was so well recognized in the eighteenth century that beauty could be hinted at

by the phrase "un je ne sais quoi." Beauty must be experienced, and yet transcends any experience. The actual experiences implied by culture suppose an entity which is external not only to the works appreciated but also to the appreciation itself. If such an entity were not present, one could neither feel exalted by an esthetic pleasure nor evaluate the works causing this pleasure. An exchange between two degrees of identity must take place, or, according to Paul Valéry, "un échange entre Moi et moi."

How can we perceive this interplay of two identities, the one personal, the other impersonal, the one made of immediate experience, the other ordering experience? This duality has been suggested by the paradoxical commonplace that "no one can see the whole, though every one judges in all circumstances." The person who makes value judgements without consulting any other court of justice may refer to personal experience and response, but a judgment, to be valid, must be explicit and communicable, and must refer to a *common* experience. Individual experience remains worthless and incommunicable in itself: to be exchangeable and valuable, it must be expressed in terms of a common experience.

As a result, the limitations of individual experience can be overcome by a *transfer of identity*. For instance, the child who wishes to learn the song known by others will spontaneously join the group and assume the common identity. In order to learn something we assume an identity which is external to the isolated self or we place ourselves on the level of communication. This ascetic self-renunciation can be more or less passionate and sincere: pedagogic success and—more generally, cultural progress—depend on it in all cases. This strange faculty of getting out of oneself allows the child to learn, the scientist to communicate, the artist to express himself, as if individual experience took place only in order to be immersed in an identity beyond the self.

This identity should not be conceived of as a borrowed personality only provisionally assumed, though every one at some time feels tempted to be taken for another person or to delude himself as to his identity. The masks which everyone wears, according to his social functions, are part of the social game and may often represent a real dedication, but every one reassumes his own self once the function is over, unless he is so much absorbed by his professional habits that he has become unable to tear off the mask.

An actor also wears a mask or a dress and plays his part more or less convincingly. What he is or feels as a private person does not matter: as an actor, he is an effect produced on spectators who do not care for the person behind the mask.

A real transfer of identity is quite different. The spectator, who sees and hears the actor, really imagines a person who is different from the actor's self, a person for whom he really feels sympathy or hatred, contempt or

admiration. A play is always written in the expectation of certain judgments on the part of the audience, who will whistle or applaud according to whether their feelings correspond with those expected by the dramatist or not. This critical divergence shows the need for an identity situated beyond the dramatist, his audience, and the actor impersonating an imaginary identity. The only valid judge in this case is not in the playhouse and is not directly implied by the play: the play and its context are summoned to his court of justice. As the play is shown for the spectators, each spectator is supposed to assume the function of a judge, but his role cannot be maintained if the play does not incite the spectator to get out of himself. The French classical theater avoided this kind of misunderstanding by obeying a certain number of rules and conventions based on a theoretical consensus. The Theater of the Absurd (Beckett, Ionesco, etc.) still obeys the fundamental rule according to which the spectators should be shaken out of themselves, not in order to identify themselves with the characters, but rather in order to be challenged by the characters. Even if the challenge is not always met with success, the frustrating failure and indigence of the characters, the scenery, the dialogue, and plot, urge the audience to ask questions, especially if the play is not particularly clear, moving or comic. In this or any other kind of theatrical play, the spectators yearn for distraction, but may have to find themselves. The game of masks and actors leads ultimately to the piercing look and to the presence of a person situated beyond the actors and the spectators. This presence is evoked by all great plays: even the protagonists vanish behind it.

Some authors are satisfied with fixing this piercing look on the stage, others try to reach the same aim by presenting their characters as pitiful, futile or vain. Few manage to go beyond sheer frustration by allowing the spectators to see themselves as they are and at the same time to identify with this new consciousness of themselves, and not with the phantoms of their belief or prejudice. In this case, a real transfer of identity has taken place, through which the spectator assumes a higher identity by mocking his own self.

Examples of a similar transfer can be found elsewhere than in the theater. Any activity of consciousness questions the real world and acts as an invitation for a heightened consciousness. Situated on the D levels of a language situation, the real world supposes a person to perceive and describe it. This person is not identical with any particular individual, since it can manifest itself on a purely relational level. Insofar as the individual is on the existential level, he must transfer his identity to a relational level in order to become what he is (an assumed identity) in front of the real world. He becomes the impersonal identity supposed by

science, in other words, a rational interpreter of appearances, sense data or abstract signs.

Though the transcendental identity is situated beyond any particular language situation, it can be exchanged for the subjective levels A, A1, A11. The lyrical poet, for instance, even if he expresses his own self, must substitute it for a communicable self which the hearers or readers can share; in other words, he too must operate a transfer of identity. The order which contains creative freedom, the structure which links all cultural elements in one single perspective, and the communicable person into which all identities are fused, cannot be perceived like objects or data, since they must be created, and as such remain outside of any language situation. They can and must be assumed, but they cannot be conceived as real, given and observable objects, as if they were texts, social relationships or natural phenomena. Cultural values are not facts.

In order to deal with culture, we must recognize an identity which manifests itself by procuration, not in its own acts, which never shows itself, but grants a meaning to appearances or withdraws it from them, and which does not recognize any other values than those which can be exchanged for it. Our task is not to escape in an inexpressible and mystical vision, but to investigate and assume what, in nature, in society and in the works of man, manifests or hides the identity without which there is no exchange and consequently no value.

The language situations examined so far constitute self-sufficient, coherent structures ordered in a unifying perspective. To these internal structures must now be added value-giving relationships characterized by a transfer of identity. Any subjective elements can be placed in the corresponding level of a language situation, but this language situation can be valued only in its relationship to a communicable identity which stands outside and which is not identical with the subject engaged in the language situation. For instance, the love of nature can be criticized as something vague and without objective relevance, but as a feeling shared by many it has a value which cannot be proved or disproved by the science of physics. Likewise, social relationships can be placed in a language situation; contemporary sociologists try to explain them rationally and empirically in their irreducible complexity, as if they had neither transcendence nor interiority, but each individual experiences them affectively, as if all persons could share the same identity which cannot be analyzed.

One may ask what is more relevant, the love of nature or the laws of physics, the individual sense of responsibility or the investigation of social complexity, the response to music or the history of art. Whatever the answer may be, experience can be valued only in relation to a model. A

language situation is not valued in relation to its subjective levels, but to its substitution for a communicable model.

How is it possible to trace this transfer of identity? It is possible to say of a scientific research that it is objective, and of a poem that it is sublime. From the beginning of the present work (in "Language and Thought"), it has been implied that the human solitude imposed by the use of languages could be overcome in two diverging directions. This means that the division between subject and object, mind and matter, idea and image inherent to any language situation, could be abolished only by opening the structures which make up a language situation. These structures are closed up only if they cannot be substituted for a model of reality or identity, so that, if submitted to a new experience, they can be transferred into a new language situation and so acquire a value of exchange.

Such transfers operate under two conditions: first, they demand an open structure and an experience which is distinct from the subjective levels of a language situation. In order to open a tightly hermetic linguistic structure, it must be entered from outside, and it supposes an experience which is distinct and independent from the experience somehow solidified in the language situation. In other words, all language situations are open to revision because they can be confirmed, verified or rejected at any time, and this verification cannot take place unless they suppose an experience which is distinct and independent. The second condition is that this experience is able to open the closed linguistic structures. The difference between the experience enclosed in a language situation and the one capable of opening and verifying the same can be compared with the difference between a novel reader's ability to identify himself with the hero and his ability to criticize the novel. The first ability remains enclosed in the language situation of the novel and plays the same game, the second one takes its distance from the text and refers to critical standards for which the novel is perhaps a poor substitute.

A language situation becomes open when it can be substituted for the second kind of experience, and its value depends on its ability to represent or replace an experience situated outside, never quite identical with the experience enclosed within the language situation. The identity of the two types of experience, and their capacity for exchanging each other, is what confers a value upon the language situation.

Two cases must be distinguished. The descriptive language situation can be opened on the side of the objective levels (C and D), which means that it can be verified according to whether or not it is in conformity with reality. As a whole, it leads to a symbolization of reality, and its value consists in adequately representing reality: no one will ever attempt to verify if the impersonal identity hidden behind the symbols can be substituted for another reality. As to the expressive language situation, it

opens on the side of the subjective levels (B and A), which means that it is endowed with value when it can be substituted for another experience than the one enclosed in the language situation. It can be confirmed—not verified—by an exchange of identity: no one will ever be in a position to evaluate a work of imagination solely by referring it to reality.

To sum up, the descriptive language situation can be considered as a substitute for a given reality, whereas an expressive language situation is endowed with value in proportion as it represents or exchanges a communicable identity. Thus the two fundamental language situations can overcome the human solitude, cross the limits of language, and open, either in the direction of given realities or, expressively, in the direction of a communicable identity. As this reality and this identity are situated beyond any language situation which represents them, and as they are as such neither subjective nor objective, there is at first sight no reason to consider them as two distinct entities. They are different only with respect to the divergent language situations; from that point of view, the one appears to be a kind of datum, the other has to be created, assumed, inwardly experienced; the one seems to be real, the other seems invisible.

Besides, we know nothing of this double entity; we know only what the expressive and descriptive language situations may represent; in other words, they cannot be considered in themselves, apart from any language situation. Whatever we know, we know by means of a language situation, but it does not mean that this double entity is situated inside language situations: it belongs to a field which may be termed the "foreign affairs" of language, and it is recognized by the very exchanges between the intrinsic and the extrinsic realms of language.

The relations that a language situation has with its environment (that which surrounds it or is foreign to it) are by no means solely determined by the nature of this environment, but they are equally dependent upon the purposes inherent in this language situation. Terms such as "nature" or "reality"—vague though they may be—are aimed at designating that which escapes all perception, and anyone wanting to invest these terms with more precision must place their referential field outside of a language situation and consequently submit it to purposes inherent in every language situation. On two grounds this field appears to us to be beyond our grasp and indefinable, because it is beyond the bounds of all perception, and because it can only be given an arbitrary meaning.

Nature and reality escape description in any form, just as the mind and God escape all expression, which is not to say that no connection obtains between language and its environment; quite the contrary, it is only possible to conceive of both rationally if we treat them as reciprocals. If reality gives the impression of fleeing from perception, it is because the latter arms itself with a descriptive structure capable of progressively

penetrating the unknown areas of reality, of conquering and occupying them. Inversely, if the creative mind makes itself felt like some mysterious inspiration, it is because there is no other knowledge of it than the one manifested by its very expression.

DISRUPTIONS OF CULTURAL UNITY

Although description and expression have followed divergent courses, one cannot fail to perceive how they complement each other by virtue of the symmetry of their structures. In fact, the involvement of the descriptive structure in the unknown realms of reality arouses both the spirit of initiative and the strategy which we studied in the chapter on scientific evolution, but this involvement is interdependent with the expressive structure in the unknown realms of inner experience, since it is from this, by transfer of identity, that all initiative is born. The concepts of identity and reality are complementary, simply through the fact that they are polarized by every language situation. Thus, a language situation which is purely descriptive or expressive, and which only aims at describing reality or expressing identity, must certainly be held to be incomplete, and a science which only seeks confirmation in its applicability suffers from the same deficiency as an art form devoid of all objectivity. It cannot be the case that there are two cultures which are ignorant of each other; there can only be one culture, or none at all.

It is true that the descriptive language situation finds its *raison d'être* in its ability to progressively penetrate the realm of unknown reality, but that alone is not enough for it to be given a cultural value. It is equally true that the expressive language situation finds its *raison d'être* in its capacity for being impregnated by the spirit which animates and transcends it, but again it is necessary for it to express itself concretely, and in order to do this it cannot totally ignore scientific progress. An art form lacking contact with reality has no more cultural value than a reductionist approach to human problems. At one of the poles of every language situation is to be found the inner experience, unverifiable because subjective, but undeniable insofar as it constitutes the content to which a form of consciousness responds so as to replace indeterminacy by order. At the opposite pole stands verifiable and objective reality, on which the rational order of the extroverted consciousness projects itself. Reality is characterized by strangeness and otherness; the mind by inwardness, and identity. Science transforms the unknown into the known, but it only progresses in relation to an irreducible unknown; one cannot envisage science in a final state where all that is unknown would be reduced to the known. Its progress modifies the idea that man makes himself out of reality, but does not change reality itself, insofar as the latter escapes all

language situations. Likewise, the most sublime art needs to express itself in a concrete and tangible manner, and thus never succeeds in making the most pure and intimate identity obvious: the latter is necessarily situated outside of the expressive structure, the rhythm, composition and unity or order of which is only one possibility in the midst of the infinite and irreducible possible forms of expression. Taken together, expressive language situations only have value in relation to the identity which is common to them but which nevertheless transcends them. The order which art projects on its own structure, like the order which science projects on its object, constitutes no more than a set of limitations, isolated states, or selections of the endlessly available identity, or—what amounts to the same thing—a set of isolated concepts and reflections of an implacably strange and unknown reality.

For irreducible reality to be transformed into an authentic inner experience, the combined resources of art and science are hardly sufficient. No work of art could be sufficiently universal to bring about this exchange, and in any case, cultural value is measured in the equations: reality = data = experience; order = liberty; strangeness = intimacy. The poles of these equations are opposed because they are external to every language situation and divided by it. For each expressive language situation one can assume an intimacy which transcends it, just as for each descriptive language situation one can suppose an irreducible externality which confirms it. But the value of the two depends upon the confrontation that they provoke between what is exterior to them and what is interior.

There is no way of conceiving identity and reality except as transcendent and opposed in relation to every language situation, but also as if polarized in relation to culture, the internality of the one responding to the externality of the other. Would scientific or artistic originality be possible unless identity and reality had something in common? Is it impossible to suppose that every conquest of reality, no matter how minimal, is only achieved at the price of a concession? The fact that religions associate identity and reality (see figure 29) is significant in this respect, and whatever the Latin etymology of "religion" may yield, it is indeed a bringing together of the two poles of every language situation that religions claim to perform. This harmony is so natural that outside of linguistic structures there is no ground for making a distinction between identity and reality. No belief is more false than that which holds that reality is material in itself, or that identity is not real. Unfortunately, since the two language situations have been separated, the divergent ideologies have entrenched themselves in a ditch, digging it, and fighting there: the spiritualists against the materialists.

This ditch is dug each time that a language situation is opened up from

just one side, thereby losing the transparency or conductibility which connects it to its two poles. What one calls the clarity of a work of art perhaps stems from the way in which its effects correspond to its intentions, as if this work were no more than a transparent medium between the idea or the intention which motivates it, and the object or effect which justifies or confirms it. A system, a doctrine, an ideology, or a work opened up only from one side can lead to nothing other than the ditch, then to the void: the intentions cannot show themselves and the effects are unforeseen or unwanted. It is in vain that one preoccupies oneself with anything other than reality, but it is just as ridiculous to believe in an infallible inspiration in spite of all the evidence to the contrary.

The kind of clarity that one finds, in particular, in a certain sort of scientific prose, and which consists of imposing an arbitrary order upon a topic which has been left opaque, is not authentic. True clarity can be found just as easily in comic and lyrical writing as in scientific prose. A growing number of university theses and dissertations only succeed in uselessly encumbering the path of sciences which in this way seem to lose sight of their aims: the apprentice sorcerers force themselves to observe the rules of a game of which they know neither the stakes nor the outcome; they are interested first and foremost in the title and its social advantages. In the same way the apprentice sorcerers of the arts, who swarm around the great schools, play imagination against reality and, under the pretext of anti-intellectualism, amuse themselves with trifles and in destroying everything. Their humor is their logic, their god a pencil, their oracle an empty and resounding slogan. Both types of sorcerers practice the rites of a society which praises appearances and fails to recognize what is authentic, a society so loosely anchored to its cultural poles that it leaves to its deviants the task of judging, and to its renegades that of exploring the unknown.

From whichever side the ditch is dug, its depth is that of the void. The most insignificant variety of music hall artist—there are some admirable ones—knows that in the trade it is necessary to reckon with the public and that from the intention (for example, to make people laugh) to the effect (laughter) there is the ultimate in art or the depth of stupidity. Whether he chooses the path of art or that of the void, he makes a calculated choice: he will land, either on the summit or in the ditch, both feet in the sea of the public: the more he splashes the more certain he is of success. Success is not a criterion when the public prefer humbug to genius, but a means of detecting authenticity and of measuring cultural achievements is to relate them, not only to the mechanism of intentions and effects, (any apprentice sorcerer can learn this) but also to the identity expressed by these intentions, to the new reality which these effects reveal, and to the agreement between identity and reality.

It is in vain that one repeats that the number of theater tickets sold is a criterion for a director who knows only how to count: a successful nullity remains a nullity. Independent of financial power and of the foibles of fashion, culture escapes all historical and political, sociological and psychological categories. One can make and remake the history of painting, of music, of literatures and one can justify what one likes for political reasons. More and more sociologies and anthropologies of culture appear. One can read the unconscious behind each word. Culture remains incorruptible. Its independence irritates political power, dogmatic teaching, triumphant charlatanism. It resists totalitarianisms, extremisms and conformisms: it involves itself in no system.

It is innovatory but timeless. No one can make a culture for himself by studying works in their chronological order: to place artistic works in their context may amount to depriving them of all cultural value. At the same time however, it may be the performance of a useful task, since it may involve the denouncing of works which are only products and do not rise above their political, historical, sociological or psychological context. Culture is formed in a structure which is appropriate to it and which belongs to everyone. Each person approaches it by an individual route, studying different works in his own way, but he can only meet others on the common ground of identity. He has chosen to go beyond his solitude, both by a transfer of identity and by the exploration of the unknown. Creative works which do not have this power are mere products and, like products, allow themselves to be incorporated in systems foreign to culture.

There is no society which recognizes the independence and values of culture. The mass media try to put the latter to their service, but it resists the attempt. It escapes all attempts at appropriation and rejoins the realm of the elusive. It breaks out of all temporal structures, be they sociological or psychological, and will not allow itself to be conceived of except in its entirety. Each of us makes his culture for himself without placing works in their social, historical or biographical contexts, but it is quite the contrary when it comes to extracting them from this context in order to arrange them in a whole which has its own structure, independent of taste and period, open on one side to unknown reality, on the other to elusive identity. Through this double opening, culture does not allow itself to integrate with anything other than what lies beyond its limits, by connecting its two poles. Thus it is explained how, whilst taking part in a determinate period, a work has value only if it registers itself outside of its period and place.

Although timeless, culture can be held to be supremely natural, since it escapes all pollution, artifice and contamination in constantly purifying itself and unburdening itself; it is indeed difficult for a mind of the twentieth century to conceive of a timeless structure which is not artificial

the Greeks, only continues because it responds to a double necessity of man, to a double demand which leads man to exceed himself and to make himself (without ever completing himself) out of the necessity of curiosity and imagination. For the moment it is useless to hark back to the timeless qualities of open experience. The task which remains is for us to specify some aspects of the imagination thus far neglected and in particular, its relations with that which we have termed curiosity. From the age of two onwards, that is to say from the time he has a mastery of language, his mother tongue or those languages which he has been taught, the child displays imagination. Stories bring it out of him, invite him to imitate them, but he does not imitate passively; he constantly plays at being other than himself; an animal, a fairy, a dwarf, or whatever. It would be silly to see anything other than artifice in this play: the child acts out roles because it is natural for him to move out of himself. In this he is different from an animal, which is never other than itself. Indeed, the imagination not only has the power of evoking that which is absent, but also that of creating in oneself a person who one is not.

The most common examples of this second type of imagination are of a literary nature, but it is necessary to make a precise distinction between the capacity for identifying characters, with whom one can more or less identify oneself, and that for creating a complete language situation, with its subjective and objective elements. Such a language situation has its own identity, which is greater than ourselves and with which, as a consequence, we are unable to identify ourselves but to which we are able to transfer all identity, beginning with the invisible identity behind the language situation. Now this transcendent identity, which never discloses itself independently and in which we go beyond ourselves, corresponds mysteriously to the unknown reality in which every open language situation draws to a close. Mysteriously, because the language situation itself provides no key for this double opening. Creativity remains mysteriously inside the creator, since he brings into contact an identity which is not him with an unknown reality. He can expose himself to the unknown and penetrate it, transform it into experience only by appealing to the identity which goes beyond it, as though he were taking from the latter that which he was giving to unknown reality: a structure opened by its two connected poles.

Neither artistic illumination nor scientific progress are conceivable without this polarization, through which a spiritual and transcendent identity provides the means for penetrating an equally elusive reality. This is only possible if language transforms identity into reality. The substitution brought about by all language does not simply consist, as is commonly supposed, in substituting signs for reality. One cannot try to replace reality with signs without at the same time addressing oneself to a

mind capable of grasping this reality. That this mind and this reality are not to be found within language seems to us equally clear and evident. As a result, over and above its function of exchange—comparable to monetary exchange—language assumes a cultural value by relating to its internal object and subject the external reality and identity for which it is only an optional, haphazard and gratuitous substitute. Culture is thus only necessary insofar as it exceeds the functional character of language and becomes useless. It is all very well to study the uses of culture, but one finds in the numerous publications dedicated to this task that the issue at stake is not culture, but language. As with all useless things, one distrusts culture and—sometimes with the best intentions in the world—one would like to find employment for it in the industry for the adornment of official lies or, what comes to the same thing, in that of profitable conformity.

Mass society—a mass composed of billions of individuals—no longer has a model to offer, and yet cannot freely and indefinitely propose, as an ideal, resemblance to millions of other individuals. These millions, in fact, prevent the individual from being himself and do not allow him any chance of attaining a distinct and recognizable identity. The more social pressures increase, the more the individual is alienated, tries to escape, and attempts to recover his identity. The subterfuge of heroism (the cowboy, the adventurer, the pilot, the astronaut, etc.) only succeeds in hiding the awful gulf which separates individuals and the need not to resemble others. Those few individuals who enjoy a private retreat—a luxury—are more than ever confronted with their interior void. As for the reveries of a solitary walker, today it is only necessary for one to follow the footsteps of Jean-Jacques Rousseau to learn that nature and silence belong to the past. However, the more noise distracts his attention, the more man looks for somewhere to withdraw to. But since he cannot escape, neither into himself nor toward others, he escapes from himself and from others: it is no longer necessary to look for his identity in himself. The isolation of the individual within the crowd is such that he cannot recognize any affinities except outside of it. Neither bourgeois culture, nor mass culture, nor any committed ideology is able to hide its inhumanity for very long; true culture can only raise itself above their baseness and approach the level of the human by disentangling itself from them, rejecting their judgments, refusing all compromise, distancing itself from their cowardice, from their blindness, their rage, intolerance, and narrowness. In the domain of culture, the highest demands are the sole guarantee of humanity.

EXTRALINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF CULTURE

The world "culture" can be understood in different ways. If its semantic field is reduced to its social aspects, it becomes a sociological object and as

such can be submitted to appropriate methods of investigation, criteria and categories. As an object it is deprived of its intrinsic values, like a habit deprived of its initial motivation, or like the mechanical practice of a rite. The Quillet encyclopedia gives a brief and typical definition: "Application que l'on met aux choses de l'esprit, étude qu'on en fait. La culture des lettres. Soins donnés à l'esprit, aux facultés intellectuelles de l'homme pour les développer, les perfectionner. La culture de l'esprit, de la mémoire." This renowned encyclopedia has little to say on this word and is satisfied with assuming that the reader will understand such notions as "esprit," "facultés intellectuelles" and "mémoire." No treatise, no theory, no title of any work dealing with culture is mentioned. Moreover, the definition is preceded by the abbreviation "Fig." (figurative sense) and followed by examples which seem to dismiss problems: "Employé absolument en ce sens: Un esprit sans culture. Manquer de culture. La culture allemande, pris parfois ironiquement." The reader is more flattered than enlightened. Why should this word be submitted to a closer scrutiny if its meaning is based on vague assumptions? A serious encyclopedia gives information on more serious matters.

The reader is thrown back on his own interpretation, and finally, on an experience which cannot be communicated because it falls outside the field of objective knowledge. Other meanings, like the cultivation of micro-organisms, are more closely examined because they lend themselves to a more objective or scientific treatment, but our meaning can be sold in the market of usage and abuse, where it may feed the pretense of a snob or stand for a rich display of stupidity. A cultural event and—why not—a cultural cocktail party may also succeed in boring or in giving a good conscience to those social animals who stand apart from the cultureless proletariat.

Far from condemning an encyclopedia which pays more attention to erudition than to culture, we must recognize that even if the definition were confined to "soins donnés à l'esprit," it would aim at the center of its target. The kind of evidence or experience which the dictionary assumes without investigation does not lend itself to an encyclopedic treatment, for it somehow precedes, presupposes and results from knowledge, but is not knowledge itself, and falls outside the scope of an encyclopedia.

There is no doubt that each language has its own structures and the fact seems established, since De Saussure, that there is a relationship between languages, language and speech, but there are many divergent opinions as to these structures and these relationships, and there is little research on a more essential relationship, the one between language and culture in the sense suggested by the dictionary. If language could be understood solely with reference to what it signifies or expresses, all our efforts would be in vain, but it seems obvious that language can also be understood as an instrument of culture.

Among the numerous examples of this finality of language we may choose what a mathematician would call the beauty of a demonstration. The pupil for whom the word "culture" evokes punishment, boredom, and effort, does not feel favorably disposed toward the beauty of a demonstration, and few teachers are inclined to awaken a sense of beauty during their mathematics lessons. The school programs usually make room for mathematics in view of the disciplines and professions requiring such knowledge. No mathematician, however, will deny that his science may cultivate minds and be endowed with a cultural value. To be a mathematician by choice and vocation is to conceive of pure or applied mathematics from another point of view than a functional and utilitarian one; namely, from a cultural point of view. This means that mathematics, like any other "descriptive" or "expressive" language, aims at discovering not only an unknown reality, but also an unknown beauty, both mysterious because they are unknown. It seems paradoxical to link mathematics with a notion of mystery, and in doing so we should not forget that we are considering mathematics neither as a pure or applied science nor as a scientific or technical tool, but in its relationship to culture, insofar as it forms its own nature, its methods and aims. To what may mathematics lead, if not to what resists it and lies beyond it? No one would think of criticizing a lack of clarity in the phrase "beauty of a demonstration," especially if this phrase is compared with what is written and said on artistic beauty. To make the expression more precise, one may add that it refers neither to the mathematical signs themselves nor to their combinations (clear and logical, therefore without mystery), nor to the objects referred to or applied to (these objects are knowable, therefore without mystery), but to the mysterious and yet undeniable relationship between these signs and their still unknown objects, as if this relationship had the power to evoke a superior harmony between the clarity of the signs and certain intellectual faculties or dispositions of the soul which remain mysterious and obscure because they give birth to clarity. For something to be clear, it must proceed from obscurity, and for information to be useful and efficient, it must be applied to an unknown reality. But how could information be clear and adequate if it did not proceed from a harmonious correspondence between its unknown origins, its clear means, and its mysterious ends?

All languages, including the language of mathematics, have a common finality which orders them as a whole in perspective. The fact that language is split up into an infinity of languages and varieties of languages—a multiplicity which can be reduced to two fundamental types submitted to recognizable categories of transfers—makes a converging perspective all the more necessary and desirable. The reason for choosing mathematics as an example could be that, of all forms of language, it is the least affective one, and the one that seems least influenced by and

dependent on other cultural factors. The phrase "beauty of a demonstration" suggests a perfection in the making and, as we have seen, an enveloping conception which presides over every phase of scientific development and remains unexpressed or implicit, as if each new step, each new elucidation, were preordained and took its place in some general frame. It is convenient to conceive of culture as of a convergence between an original and implicit conception situated beyond any language issued from it, and an unknown reality situated beyond any language. If this hypothesis is adequate, it may be assumed that any type of language has a double significance, the one contained in one particular work of art or in one particular field of science at one particular phase of its development, and the cultural significance of works or research with respect to the whole cultural context.

Can it be denied that the scientific work of Pascal and Descartes was born in a spiritual context, with the former in a context of agony (in Unamuno's sense of "struggle"), with the latter in a kind of illumination? The history of the sciences and arts would be reduced to an incoherent enumeration of facts, dates and coincidences if it were not related to a transcendental order. The whole context of the sciences and of the arts cannot be exhaustively investigated from a sociological, historical, biographical or anthropological point of view, but only from a common point of view which involves all others, which is situated beyond all others, and which is timidly called culture.

The hypothesis that language has a structure is commonly accepted, but even so there is no consensus as to the constituent elements of language. The hypothesis of a cultural structure is generally held in doubt, but little effort is made to verify this point. That language and culture cannot be comprehended separately, and that they form a single structure—that is a bold hypothesis which leads us along less familiar paths. The failure of all attempts so far to analyze the workings of the consciousness, the elements of language, and the categories of culture possibly results from the fact that a general conception has never before been proposed. A study of isolated elements cannot lead to valuable results if it is not founded upon a knowledge of the whole to which the elements belong. It can readily be admitted that a relation exists between the consciousness of objects and the signs that one employs for the purpose of designating these objects, not forgetting that there is a risk here of falling into what certain structuralists call "psychologism." However, even brave souls refuse to broach the subject when it is a question of examining the hypothesis of a relation between that which we have called a language situation (that is, a structure comprising not only the signs and their objects, but also mental acts) and that which it replaces: namely, the identity at the subjective pole, the reality at the

objective pole, and their convergence. It is the relationship between language and that which goes beyond it which causes the trouble. The analysis stops at a prudent distance from transcendence; it is considered preferable to let the recognized surveyors of this territory—theologians and philosophers—make the journey without fear, and to return with the assurance that all is in order. Those who feel the need to be reassured will see a guarantee in this verification; others can dispense with exploring a field which is so uncertain and perhaps even empty.

The attitude which we have just characterized gives evidence of a very widespread mistrust of all that cannot be perceived, verified, recorded or calculated, measured or quantified, of all that requires a commitment or a sacrifice. Whatever relates to the individual is questionable, whatever refers to objects is not: the world of objects has the last word, the mind must remain silent, so much so that it dries up. Official or industrial research submits science to material interests; all other orientations are regarded as subjective. The basest motives are decked out in a new virtue—objectivity. Against this passive attitude, which only opens the door to the abuses and blindness of technocracy, rises up the revolt of violence and arbitrariness, pathetic and powerless, because it is only armed with ideology and the support of discontent. Purely destructive, it aims at disorder. Its revolutionary and progressive faith sees in the chaos and the ruins the promise of a new beginning.

Neither objectivity raised to the rank of a virtue nor violence have a future. Their sterility results from an obstinate desire to cut themselves off from the sources of culture, as if one still had the strength to pick the fruits, but not that required for irrigating the oasis. If one endeavors to investigate the soul, like Jung, it is with the excuse of turning it into an object. One converts the sick and the sane to the reality of the soul, but one does not believe in any other regenerative power than that of a scientific method. Each person ferociously guards his exit to the labyrinth of material interests, but no one looks for Ariadne's thread. No exit, no opening, no transcendence. Music is recorded on discs and on tapes. It is broadcast, televised, in either live or recorded transmissions it invades the living room or greets the traveler. The most beautiful landscapes become tedious, like all that which it is claimed exists through the fault of our laziness. Painting is reproduced and emerges from the collections and the museums, but this is not a case of art being placed within the reach of everyone, it is nothing other than the appearance of art. One can know everything about a painting blackened with age: its family and historical associations, its changes in ownership, the fluctuations in its price and the history of its sales. Everything except for what is important. One can hear everything, see everything, touch everything, feel everything, without actually seeing, touching or feeling anything, without either thinking or

understanding, without liking or admiring. Our world is burdened with false marvels of objectified art, of commercialized science, of junk, of souvenirs, of curios, of sentimental trash, of trifling ridiculous and unreal accessories. A language programed for microphones, transistors, for cathode tubes and for language laboratories attempts to provide a substitute for culture and only succeeds in making the void greater. No age has demonstrated so well both the power and the impotence of language, its void and its silence.

It is not a question of being interested in the picture as such, but in that which it leaves invisible. The genuinely marvelous does not show itself. Mozart is not appreciated because he is known, but because he is loved. If one is unimpressed by his work, he does not induce enchantment from the first musical phrase, he does not evoke anything immortal, he does not make one feel that one is part of a mystery. Likewise, all that is touched by the beloved woman is sacred, and those who approach her are not worthy to do so. It is vain to reassert that love is an illusion: without the transfiguration that it brings about, nothing has value. The case is similar with language, which in fact serves a thousand purposes, though only one of these has value: that of effacing itself to the point of uttering nothing more than a cry and of approaching the limits of silence. The true vocation of language is to be transparent. It is not what it says which is of importance, but the relation between what it says and what it leaves unexpressed. The text and the writing say nothing in themselves, they are of no value except in the relation which links them to the inexpressible; they please, elevate and delight us only if they establish such a relation.

If there is no point in studying this relation, if it must be regarded as an adventurous and uncheckable hypothesis, then any other kind of study or hypothesis is without value.

The contrary hypothesis, according to which art can do without love and science without conscience, is itself incapable of verification, since it relegates the artist and scholar in favor of intellectual aridity. Contrary to the belief of the conformists—by “conformists” is meant people who adopt the attitude previously characterized and in whose case the scale of cultural values is confused with that of monetary value—there is no policy more defensible than that of protecting culture from the predominant criteria of the measurable quantity. Only that which can be placed on the objective levels of a language situation is subject to measurement; only that which can be placed on the subjective levels of a language situation is open to experience; only that which can be placed in the cultural perspective resulting from a language situation is open to appreciation.

The structure of language is not demonstrable in the sense that the chemical composition of a body is demonstrable, because it does not display itself except through a language situation and it cannot be

attributed to an object to which language refers. It is no less real because it displays itself directly (it is its own expression, of itself and nothing else) and dispenses with a demonstration; it is even that sort of evidence which, like many facts of language, one loses awareness of. But there is nothing more certain, and since it is a question of structure, we are not risking anything by studying its composition.

As for culture, it is still less scientifically demonstrable since the only object to which it relates is language, which is nothing more than a substitute for objects. Even more than language it is its own expression, since there is no other evidence for it except its links with the ineffable and the unknown; one can indeed say that it is essentially a structure, but a structure which elevates man above himself and which gives life a value. If language leads us from the existential to the relational plane, culture leads us from the relational to the transcendental, but this double elevation—effected by means of a twofold substitution—instead of carrying man into a rarefied atmosphere, brings about a return to the origins of life, and a contact not only with the reality situated beyond language, but also with the identity beyond the self which takes us out of language and restores to us, after this double substitution, primordial authenticity.

THE CUMULATIVE CONCEPTION AND THE HIERARCHY OF VALUES

It is necessary to insist on the fact that considerations of language and, *a fortiori*, of culture cannot be objective or scientific in any real sense of these terms, even in the case of someone who succeeds in taking up a sufficiently distant position in regard to his own experience and its subjective or objective content.

Such considerations can, nonetheless, lay claim to evidence and truth which is inaccessible to the conformists mentioned above. It is impossible to recognize this evidence and this truth by exterior signs: one has them within oneself and proof sought elsewhere is simply elusive.

“Fashionable” culture, which is to be recognized by the way in which certain words are pronounced or by the way a tie is knotted, succeeds in deceiving no one, but it is a form of hypocrisy all the more insidious because it takes over arguments which appear to be irrefutable. These arguments are founded upon a rather seductive conception of culture which views the latter as the totality of works of art through which it is manifested. Behind the cumulative conception we once again quite clearly find the quantitative method of evaluation which, we repeat, must under no conditions be applied to culture. As no one can have read everything, one chooses arbitrarily, and mostly according to social criteria, certain reading matter which gives one the right to enter into an exclusive coterie.

It is unnecessary to add that such a culture has only a social value, which is dubious anyway. Having read such and such a book provides one with a visiting card. However, it is on the basis of its principles and its nature rather than in its social aspects that this conception must be deemed to be radically false. One can have seen every painting, one may not have failed to be present at every "cultural event," and yet one will still have no advantage over the illiterate except that of pretension. A doctoral thesis which takes into account everything that has been written on a subject does not necessarily come closer to culture than an aphorism. A good judgment which is well-directed makes liberal students suspicious of a culture which is no more than strong doses of bibliography. It even repels them sometimes and without trying to justify the Nanterre revolutionaries of May 1968 who treated the library shelves to the blowtorch, we must nonetheless affirm that culture is not to be found in catalogues, nor in museums, nor in libraries: either it is living or it does not exist at all. One can take account of a book and one can quote from it without deriving anything of value from it. The cumulative approach leads to aridity and its ultimate effect is nil. A book can have so many different effects that to take account of them is almost certainly to miss the point. The important thing is not culture as an object, but that which one has created, that which is within one and which one appreciates.

Inseparably linked to the system of quantitative and monetary evaluation, the cumulative conception of culture, of which the educational value is nil, is not restricted to the world outside the university. The birth has been witnessed of an economics of culture (*Bildungsoekonomie*) which calculates, in particular, the yield of schools and libraries.

In economic terms culture constitutes an enormous expenditure of intellectual assets at the price of an enormous wastage of intellectual efforts, resulting from competition at all levels: individual, social, ideological and international. The immensity of these efforts reduces culture to a system of exploitation of brainpower, and competition makes it still more unbearable in that it encourages inequalities. All these efforts are detrimental. No one would dream of denying the utility of microfilms, but precisely because of their utility they contribute to a depreciation of scholarship and to an increase in the ultimate hypocrisy of quantitative knowledge. As for the ignorant masses, the music industry exploits their reserves of stupidity. Record producers buy programs on the radio in order to influence the taste of the listeners. Political and economic interests have an easy time manipulating the anonymous and passive masses of television viewers. Culture on tapes puts the finishing touches and deprives youth of its last critical and spontaneous responses, the former being left with nothing more than the choice between one dealer and another: the cumulative approach ends in the destruction of every

trace of autonomous cultural activity. Success sells itself; one puts stars up for auction, and love is sold on records, love and all sorts of other sentimental products. In the windows of bookshops the following two drugs are to be seen side by side: brain fodder and erotic junk.

Culture can only survive outside the scope of commerce. People are astonished that contemporary art should be abstruse and disconcerting: cannot science be described in a similar fashion? One should rather be disturbed by the fact that the emptiness of intellectual and sentimental products still blinds the saturated public. If the misdeeds of the cumulative standpoint are only opposed by its own destructive force, there still remains a means of wiping them out without violence: to escape from their grasp, not out of cowardice, but on the contrary, in order to rediscover the sense of the human and the sacred. To rediscover oneself is always, all things considered, to go beyond oneself and to let oneself be carried away, to make contact with others and the unknown. In every age, culture develops in a climate of seclusion and retires from sight; this does not make it in any way less real or active. Its social impotence is equal to its inability to survive without going beyond itself. It would be wrong to underestimate the power of this overstepping, even in our age. The true identity of man is to be found outside of the social context, in what some economists would call a superstructure. One can despise it, but one cannot escape it.

Adopting a spurious form of estheticism, people are known to go into raptures before the grand designs of nature: the rounded foliage of a beech tree, or the conical shape of a fir, patterned rocks, the interweaving chains of desoxyribonucleic acid, etc. A hypocritical belief is put forward which pretends to observe an esthetic design in nature. In fact, we never cease to attribute shapes to nature, though we know that the latter only provides us with a pretext for doing so, and nothing more. Art is founded upon this piece of knowledge, even if artists occasionally allow this point to slip into the unconscious; art tries and succeeds in doing what nature does not set out to do, though this seems to be achieved rarely and quite by chance: the creation of a form by means of natural materials and, thereby, human expression. It goes without saying that nature, lacking form, does not express itself, but it lends itself, whether we like it or not, to human purposes and tends relentlessly to destroy the material evidence for them.

If, in the eyes of those who consider themselves to be enlightened, fetishism plays the part of primitivism or stupidity, then what is to be said about the fetishism of those same millions of tourists who all gather at some few points on the globe, Cervin, or the Grand Canyon? Their stupidity is monumental and allies itself to the cumulative conception of culture which is just as prevalent in travel agencies as in universities.

Admiration for nature takes us back to the time when people worshiped it, though in worshiping it they at least attributed a spirit to it. Today our scholars know that this spirit does not exist, and as they themselves are deprived of it, the old penchant for worship regains the upper hand, and once again people are to be found admiring rock fissures. They deceive themselves voluntarily in their tendency to assign even the least spirit to objects; their values are false, but they pretend to believe in them in order to justify their barrenness and poverty of spirit. How much destruction is necessary in order for them to understand that the spirit is always transcendent, whilst reality never is?

The profound and unacknowledged function of art, and this is today more true than ever before, is to give the lie to fetishist illusions. This it achieves through demonstrating that nothing can be expected either from nature, reality, or the gods except that which one would have them say. He who has nothing to say is certainly not in a position to make inanimate things talk. One will find nothing outside of one which is not already carried within one. Even science is subject to this rule. Insofar as it is creative, it gives the lie to the cumulative conception, which rests psychologically on the myth of the treasure island, on the illusion of finding truth in objects.

The sterility of our age remains unacknowledged despite the daring of those who expose it. When Marcel Duchamp exhibited a utilitarian object, which was taken to be a bottle rack, this object was placed in the category of anti-art. In our time one sees a Kienholz making art out of household refuse.

These symptoms are not isolated. It is wrong to talk here of a destruction of traditional values, it is rather a question of the conventional means of art coming under attack. If art desperately tries to return to the origins of its freedom, it must first of all attack the deification of the object which results from the cumulative conception. In fact, one cannot liberate oneself from objects except in liberating oneself from oneself.

Despite its boldness contemporary art seems chaotic and inarticulate. In order to "restructure" it, it would be sufficient to come to an agreement on the hierarchy of our experiences. One can subject any form of hierarchy to questioning, but one cannot express a valid judgment which is not founded upon a hierarchy of values. Our study has led us to make a distinction between three levels of experience: existential, relational, and cultural. As soon as it is placed in a language situation, an object is raised from the existential plane to the relational plane, but this new situation does not constitute an ultimate level of experience: it is only a form, the content of which escapes us. In order to explain the inadequacy of the relational plane, we have the limits of the levels of consciousness. Each language situation reflects one or several levels of consciousness, design-

nated by the letters A, A1, A11, etc., A1 being the consciousness of A, and each higher level being free and separate from the lower levels. But this freedom is not unlimited: on the relational plane one cannot conceive of consciousness without object, in other words consciousness depends on its content, no matter how finely separated it may be, and the more it is abstract the more it is rarefied and becomes distant from life. It is not freedom which must be sought for on the road of abstraction, but rather a useful formulation, sure but abstruse.

On the relational plane a language situation has the function of bringing consciousness and its content into a descriptive or expressive relationship, in other words, of creating a meaning, but not a value. In order for this language situation to take on a value, it is necessary for it to refer to a superior, transcendent and external order, to open itself and become transparent. Precisely here lies the ultimate function of language; namely, to substitute itself for something else, but this something else remains elusive, out of reach, free.

On the cultural plane, the same language situation, given that it opens itself, takes on a value which goes beyond its meaning. It is nothing more than a substitute, a shape, a negative, a text without context, and it has no value except in terms of what it exposes.

Now, it exposes neither consciousness nor the content of consciousness which is in it, and in fact, beyond a language situation there can be no distinction between object and subject, between reality and identity, between matter and spirit. All these distinctions are a product of language, the descriptive or expressive relationship between these separate entities giving an indication of their elusive unity, which escapes language. This unity constitutes the cultural context to which a particular and restricted language situation opens itself.

Musical experience offers evidence for this cultural context, for it requires us to choose between several kinds of music and several kinds of context, all of which are omnipresent or at least within reach: one only needs to press a button or turn a knob. The fashion which is current in an age, which in some respects is frenzied and in others irresponsible, is a music of the possessed in such a state of unconsciousness and stupefaction that they are no longer able to move autonomously, and thus resemble plants rather than animals. The dancers who mime to this music appear to be operated like puppets on elastic, and the intensity of sound attains such paroxysms that it seems to banish all thought and to deaden the senses. Whether one abandons oneself to this kind of music or whether one loathes it, one cannot disregard the social context within which it thrives. Trapped in this social context, music takes possession of bodies by using a great deal of amplification, but it is quite clearly evident that the more it thunders the more it is excluded from any cultural context. It is unable,

after a *fortissimo*, to retire on tiptoe, transparent, and as if touched lightly by the breath of the spirit.

In order for the soul to be delighted and the body to be possessed, two musical forms and two distinct contexts are necessary. The difference does not reside in the composition or the execution, nor in the theme or the instruments, but it is to be found in the inner experience to which music bears witness. Popular and commercial music are rightly considered to be inferior: where it is simply a question of sound being produced, then musical pleasure as such is reduced. Music is also in that which is left inaudible, just as painting is in that which is left undepicted, and poetry is in silence.

However, even the most demanding minds content themselves with admitting the existence of a context which is specifically cultural, which encompasses and goes beyond the manifestations of expressive or descriptive language, and in relation to which these manifestations take on a cultural value. One contents oneself with saying that a work is sublime or that it displays invisible forces, without trying to be more precise. Nonetheless we have just seen that the vague notion of culture masks a well-defined structure. Progress in the study of culture is not possible without a prior examination of the details of its structure. For instance, we can specify that the notion of cultural value is founded upon the relations between three levels of experience ranked according to a fixed hierarchy: the existential level, which in some sense contains the raw material of experience and its living context, the language situation, which uses experience as a pretext, and the cultural context which uses language as a pretext. Language itself is nothing but a substitute; one must not look for value in the written text, but in its relation to the cultural context. A text is of no value in itself, but only in relation to its cultural context. This context is situated outside the language situation, which thus implies an experience extrinsic to the text. Either one has this experience or one is incapable of having it; a text is either measurable against this transcendent experience or it is cut off from any cultural context. In order to assess the merit of a text it is no use comparing it with other texts or placing it in its historical or biographical context, since the value relation is established at a higher level.

PERSONAL JUDGEMENT AND CRITERIA OF VALUE

The term "transcendent experience" would lead to confusion if it referred to an inaccessible experience. The problem here is one of the most common in the sphere of culture: one is unable to become acquainted with a work without at the same time passing a random judgment upon it. Montaigne, in his chapter "Des Livres" (Livre second, ch. X) writes, "Je

ne cherche aux livres qu'à m'y donner du plaisir par un honneste amusement"; and soon after he adds, "Si ce livre me fasche, j'en prens un autre, et ne m'y adonne qu'aux heures où l'ennuy de rien faire commence à me saisir." Trying only to describe himself, Montaigne is not at all concerned to know whether his opinions are correct or not, provided that they are his own. Later on he tells us, "Je dy librement mon advis de toutes choses, voire et de celles qui surpassent à l'aventure ma suffisance, et que je ne tiens aucunement estre de ma jurisdiction; ce que j'en opine, ce n'est pas aussi pour establir la grandeur et mesure des choses, mais pour faire connoistre la mesure et force de ma veuë." Montaigne here introduces a most important distinction between his personal opinions and judgments of a superior nature: he seems to admit that literary works are subject to criteria of greatness and importance which are above individual judgment. Just as it seemed desirable to us to posit language situations and to relate them by means of a transfer to a single model, so it seems necessary to us to employ a method of placing artifacts in a language situation by studying not only the internal relations of language situations, but also the relations between individual judgment and an impersonal order called culture.

Taking up this last point, Montaigne's *Essais*, through their personal tone and spontaneous approach, are first of all concerned with personal judgment, but no one would contest the fact that, in particular, the numerous quotations from Latin which recur throughout place the *Essais* in an infinitely broader context. Although Montaigne has personal aims ("proposer aucune fin que domestique et privée"), he has opened to question all the traditional learning of the ancients in submitting it to his own experience. He expresses himself on this subject with all the clarity that one might desire:

"Et ce, que je cache par fois le nom de l'auteur à escient ès chose que j'emprunte, c'est pour tenir en bride légèreté de ceux qui s'entremettent de juger de tout ce qui se présente, et, n'ayans pas le nez capable de gouter les choses par elles-mêmes, s'arrestent au nom de l'ouvrier et à son crédit. Je veux qu'ils s'eschaudent à condamner Ciceron ou Aristote en moy." ("Des Livres")

Montaigne here attacks not only the fickleness of personal opinions, but also the established critical approach. "Gouter les choses par elles-mêmes," is to place experience above critical norms.

The challenge directed by Montaigne toward the critics and toward the reputations that they make and destroy is more relevant now than ever before. Soon after the essays of Montaigne appeared, the work of Bacon granted priority to experience in the scientific world. Experience is unending; on the contrary it exposes everything to the unknown, bases everything upon creative originality, and directs all human effort toward a

more and more distant goal. It is in this open perspective that language situations must be placed. After having considered them in themselves, we have to place them in their cultural context. However, even if the results of this method are unforeseeable, one must not exclude the possibility of recognizing a distinct structure. The original works, which serve as a pretext or a substitute for an original experience, in some way assume the form of the unknown, and must be rediscovered. Through their originality they provide us with the opportunity of experiencing something new; and it is clearly possible to examine this experience so long as one does not attempt to relate it to the experiences of others or to prevalent norms.

Let us suppose that the experience of the new arises from an open language situation. Given this assumption, two possible routes of exploration emerge: one through the objective levels and beyond, one through the levels of consciousness and beyond. If we assume further that the two routes converge, we are able to advance whilst at the same time distancing ourselves from the language which is familiar to us. Because of its structure, language can in fact only divide the levels of experience. Following this double route everything appears to us to be new, marvelous and ineffable. The more a language situation opens itself toward this point of convergence, the more it gives us the sensation of something new. But not only is the subjective impression of importance, for we have at the same time a natural criterion for judging the value of the cultural dimension of a language situation. This criterion is present in our own undeniable experience, insofar as we dare to escape from our habits and the well-trodden paths in order to venture outside of ourselves, beyond everything that is already familiar to us.

On this double route of discovery surprise is unceasing. The underlying originality recovers all its freshness, as in the following passage by Montaigne:

"Il faut musser ma foiblesse souz ces grands credits. J'aimeray quel-qu'un qui me scache deplumer, je dis par clairté de jugement et par la seule distinction de la force et beauté des propos: car moi, qui, a faute de memoire, demeure court tous les coups à les trier par recognoissance de nation, scay tres-bien connoistre, à mesurer ma portée, que mon terroir n'est aucunement capable d'aucunes fleurs trop riches que j'y trouve semées, et que tous les fruicts de mon creu ne les sçauraient payer." ("Des Livres").

Here Montaigne invites us to pull his work apart, to strip off what he has borrowed in order to unearth that which is truly his and of his own invention. His modesty warns us of the poverty and the limited degree of his authenticity, but he makes it understood that he is not sterile. Cultivation of the soil, however poor it may be, promises fruits, and the search for authenticity opens up to us the road of discovery, for it is a

question of a soil which produces new species, which fade, wither and lose their freshness if left uncultivated.

True culture is not to be found in books but in oneself. Books can act as a temporary substitute for the true experience, which in turn can only begin once the books have been read and put to one side. Pascal has the advantage over Montaigne of having read him, but instead of treating him in his own terms he submits him to a theological analysis:

"Il inspire une nonchalance du salut, *sans crainte et sans repentir*." (*Pensées*, 63). Pascal, who judges himself severely, refuses to recognize himself in Montaigne and judges Montaigne's purposes harshly. This is precisely because to portray oneself was the most original thing, and thus blameworthy in the eyes of those who claim to establish the truth: "Le sot projet qu'il a de se peindre!" (*Pensées*, 62). A theology which, because it claims to be in possession of the truth, suppresses research and the innocent attempt at self-portrayal, will not survive, whereas Montaigne will. This is precisely because he has opened up his whole self and because in looking for himself he has escaped the limitations of the self. Pascal saw quite clearly how it was that Montaigne escaped him: "Ce n'est pas dans Montaigne, mais dans moi, que je trouve tout ce que j'y vois." (*Pensées*, 64) If Montaigne is always "within me," it is because we are able to momentarily reject or forget him without fear of letting him perish. He remains in us, but Pascal's theology is far from us.

LIMITS TO CULTURE

No book can be substituted successfully for experience. Pascal criticizes Montaigne, Voltaire criticizes Pascal, Victor Hugo criticizes Voltaire, etc., but in the final analysis experience remains in possession of the land which they all cultivate. Little by little the obscure earth displays its qualities, but no flower would bloom unless the weeds were eradicated and the parasites eliminated. An extremely rigorous distinction is imposed; that is to say that culture is not simply left to the whims of majority opinion, on the contrary it is submitted to a judgment which is formed slowly, carefully and rigorously. Only such a judgment is able to discern an improved species from the common ones. In the botanical garden of culture, the public judges according to appearances and according to its needs; it would plunder everything if it were not separated from the plants by means of fences, and if the gardener did not pursue his experiments sheltered from the public gaze in a greenhouse, which we are now going to try and discreetly enter.

By letting in daylight, the open experience protects the objects of its efforts from bad weather. It exposes them to light from outside, but cultivates them in a favorable environment. The results of this care are

not always definitive, but must be continually surpassed in order for the primordial demand of the open experience to be met with an adequate response: each result can be described as a stage on the road to perfection. It is therefore necessary to study each result, without losing sight of the inaccessible goal. The open experience by no means concentrates solely on its task, but directs the latter by means of its openness toward that which goes beyond the experience. This is not because it knows what perfection is, but because it criticizes its task and refers itself to the demands of going beyond. A result is only achieved in order to be exceeded and only serves the function of taking the place of a former experience. In the field of culture a result can only have the value of a temporary replacement, since it is the case that all forms of language are only able to provide a provisional substitute for authentic experience, the latter remaining open, beyond language situations, to the inaccessible and ineffable identity toward which they converge. Thus, a musical experience and a pictorial experience can be provisionally substituted for the same open experience. One might speak, for example, of an impressionist Debussy, without for all that, rigorously comparing him with impressionist painters: one does not for the minute suppose a common and underlying experience. To the demand for originality, which the open experience imposes upon cultural work, may be added a law of agreement which links all works together, no matter what form they may take, be it musical, pictorial, poetic, dramatic, and so on.

In this context one is bound to think of the sonnet by Baudelaire:

"Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent."

It is however necessary to make a distinction between the deciphering of nature towards which Baudelaire urges us:

"La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers."

and the experience which is founded upon a language already constituted by texts, scores, canvases, etc., in order to be able to confront them with an entity neither natural nor religious, but cultural. This language, which is already formed, takes the place of the open experience by force of its originality and its agreements. This experience is distinguished from all others in that it does not develop in a closed context but exposes itself to an identity situated beyond language, at the point of convergence and origin of all language situations. In short, it is a question of a transcendent experience in that one does not have it directly oneself, but through others who act as media, in that it does not commit our own identity, nor

even "les transports de l'esprit et des sens," but the distant outcome of language situations opened in this way; their opening toward the ineffable unity which language divides.

If, in referring to that which cannot be placed in a language situation, we once again use the term "experience," it is because we experience a certain unity in participating in the transcendent identity in relation to language; it is because we are capable of sacrificing our identity, of going beyond it and replacing it; it is because we are not really ourselves except beyond the language which divides us. If cultural experiences were not open, interchangeable and linked one with another, no transcendent experience would be possible, and we would never be anything other than a single, isolated identity among an infinity of possible identities, a substitute which replaces nothing, a useless participant in the futile game of language. However, we dare to suppose that the experience of language does not take place in a vacuum and does not tend to open upon a reality which it replaces, a reality which cannot be divided, that is to say, neither purely objective nor purely spiritual, since it is outside of all language situations, but at one and the same time real and spiritual, both of itself and of us, sufficiently inaccessible to be transcendent, and yet open enough for us to participate in it and for it to transfer its identity to us.

The experience which we have of this transcendent reality is not however comparable to the experience of something distant and barely perceptible, it is rather the strongest experience we can have, and one that represents for us a driving force. It is indeed the experience *par excellence* since it is the only one to which our true transferred identity corresponds, it is the only experience which we have through language (through intermediaries) and beyond it, the experience of reality which goes beyond language, and which all language displaces and replaces. It is thus situated beyond the language which it opens and can even dispense with language during certain periods of life when a feeling of love, delight, or a generous action carries us beyond ourselves and confers on us this universal identity through which we are able to participate in a superior reality. There cannot be any other inspiration than love, if by love we understand the unity toward which open language converges, the unity which is the fruit of culture.

CHAPTER 10

The Substitution of Experience for Language

PLAN OF PART IV

The foregoing preliminary remarks outline the main themes of Part IV and give a glimpse of their underlying unity. These themes must now be submitted to a logical examination based on an analysis of the cultural components, as distinct from the linguistic structures.

Since inner experience is substituted for every possible language situation, we must start from it in our study of the specifically cultural components. This will be the subject of this Chapter.

This experience is situated in a context of its own. Depending on whether it is substituted for a descriptive or an expressive language situation, it refers to a context which we have called a reality or an identity. Chapters 11 and 12 will be devoted to this.

As contained in experience, the identity expressed and the reality described imply a context external to experience. Inasmuch as it is open to what lies outside it, experience makes an exchange between its internal and external contexts, so that the identity expressed is validated by the spirit which informs it (Chapter 13), while the reality described is verified by the external context of its data (Chapter 14).

The external components, spirit and data, are distinguishable only in the light of an experience resulting from the two fundamental language situations: there is no other reason for differentiating them. To restore the balance of culture, experience turns toward the point of convergence of its external context (Chapter 15).

DEFINITION OF EXPERIENCE

The use of the word "experience" might well lead to misunderstanding and ambiguity if we based our argument on the philosophical and

scientific or legal senses of the term. To explain clearly our use of such an important word, we need only refer to the specifically cultural context in which we place it. We have proceeded in a similar way in the three previous parts of this work, in which we have defined a number of equally vague terms ("object," "subject," "thought," "language," "reality," "expression," "description," "level," "threshold," "limit," "transfer," "meta-language," "communication," "transmission" etc.) in a specifically linguistic context which makes their sense clear. The structure which we have called "language situation" associates elements that are in themselves incompatible (person, A; thought, B; language, C; reality, D) and are likely to be envisaged in anything but a linguistic context. The complexity of a language situation makes us doubt whether language, even when stripped of "psychologism," can ever be reduced to a purely rational structure (which does not by any means prevent us from making a scientific study of language). It is not Chomsky's term "deep structure" that makes us skeptical, but the attempt to cross the threshold of incompatible levels. The terms we have just mentioned are definable in relation to a structure which cannot be reduced to logic because it associates elements and levels which may occur in another context. Yet language situations, however complex they may appear, correspond to certain models, can be reduced to two fundamental situations—the expressive and the descriptive—and ultimately demonstrate the linguistic unity of culture through the operation of what we have called transfers. It may therefore be said that the entire body of language situations constitutes a structure.

It remains for us to demonstrate that culture also has a unity of its own; for the time being, we will merely formulate this hypothesis. The word "experience" will take on its full meaning when the hypothesis has been verified, that is to say, when we have demonstrated that culture constitutes a unity distinct from that of language. Since the language situation differs from what we have called an existential situation by reason of the fact that, as it were, it substitutes signs for the latter and gives it a sense, it is clear that the passage from language to culture is accomplished by a restitution of the experience content which language has derived from existence. It may be said, indeed, that language contains, represents (takes the place of) and communicates an experience content. We are bound to postulate the existence of a recipient destined to receive that content, so that language serves only as a vehicle for it.

We have had to admit, however, that things are not so simple and that language is more than a mere vehicle for the content of raw experience: it transforms it by engaging in an interplay of relationships corresponding to a particular language situation. Before being transferred into the recipient which we call experience, the content is thus put into a language situation. It is said to be made significant or to be coded and thereby

modified. Of course, the object of decoding is to reconstitute the original, authentic content as perfectly as possible, that is to say as it existed before it was transformed by language. We are bound to suppose that this reconstitution can take place only if the content fits into a mold that has been prepared for it. Experience may thus be conceived of as a recipient which is capable of taking on an infinite variety of forms and of receiving extremely variable contents. But this is not enough. For a content to be decoded and recognized, experience must have been acquired beforehand, the recipient must already have adapted itself to the content transmitted by language, and experience must be capable of constituting itself independently of any message and of reconstituting any message of its own accord. In other words, experience as we understand it can very well do without language, and its content is not necessarily identical with the content that language transmits to it: it may even arbitrarily substitute a content which is different, but more authentic because it has experienced it itself. It then assumes the right to interpret, sometimes in a very critical way, the messages which are transmitted to it. As an example of this attitude, we may mention the posthumous interpretations, often very divergent, of a work whose author's inspiration cannot possibly be reconstituted, but which happen to correspond to a chronological series of experiences substituted for an inspiration that has become remote and hypothetical.

Thus the content of a message presupposes prior experience, without which it cannot be deciphered or verified, and this experience, independent of language, does not adapt itself to contents that are mere chance acquaintances, as it were, but only to those which it has itself experienced, independently of any manner of representation and signification. In other words, experience has a content of its own, which it can substitute arbitrarily for any excitation, incitation or message: it receives only what it gives itself and gives only what it can receive. It gains this independence only if it opens up and, as it were, forges its own inalienable and original content, capable of taking the place of any other. It is the necessity of readiness for a prior, original content that makes Pierre Duhem say of scientific experience, "this experience needs no justification: it is."

If we now try to represent the foregoing argument graphically, we have to distinguish three phases, the first taking into account the independence of experience with regard to the language situations which it can assimilate (fig. 42), the second describing the substitution of an experience content for the content of any language situation (fig. 43), and the third representing the readiness of experience to receive the content which belongs to it (fig. 44).

The three above figures do not represent chronologically successive phases, but the development of a reasoning based on the hypothesis of a

Figure 42

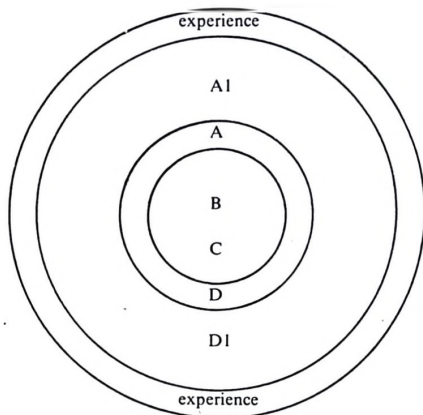


Figure 43

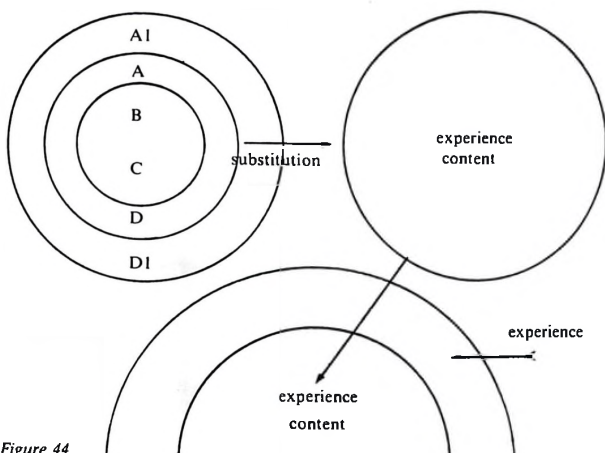


Figure 44

cultural entity independent of language. As this hypothesis is inconceivable without the autonomy of an experience capable of substituting its own prior content for any other content, we propose to examine this phenomenon of substitution before going on to study the content of cultural experience.

SUBSTITUTION

Thus far, we have taken language as the starting point for our considerations and have made it an operational base, so to speak. Yet we have never ceased to see in it a substitute or to recognize its essential function of signifying, replacing something with signs.

Even in its highest and most perfect manifestations, language can claim only to signify something other than what it is, to divert attention from itself so that one can recognize through it an identity that it expresses or a reality that it describes. In this sense, language appears as the form or recipient of a content which is put into a language situation.

It goes without saying that the signifying function of language is accompanied by another function, that of communicating an experience content, but we have just supposed that this experience content belongs only provisionally to a language situation which serves as a vehicle for it. In order to be communicable it must be taken into a recipient prepared to receive it. Once it has been carried by the vehicle of language, this content takes up its place in a structure which is independent of any language situation and may be called a "cultural situation."

A cultural situation is doubly independent and original inasmuch as it attempts to return the received message to the impulse which has produced it, either recognizing that impulse or denying its authenticity. This work of verification would be impossible if cultural experience had no autonomous criteria applied to its own content. If this is the case, the function of cultural experience is to substitute every recognizable content for its own, thus endowing it with authenticity and creative originality.

In this case, the work of insertion into a language situation has its origin in an experience without which it has no content to carry, and it ends in the restitution of the experience from which it originates. But in writing this book we have proceeded in the opposite direction, from the examination of language situations to that of cultural situations. Since the latter are at once primordial and final in relation to the former, we infer that the phenomenon of substitution implies both a return to original experience and a departure in the direction of authentic experience, according to whether it appears in the light of a deciphering (decoding) process or of insertion into a language situation.

Being at once primordial and final, the cultural situation defends its

authenticity by reducing language to the status of a substitute which it can do without. If it depended on language and had come from it, the content carried by language would be lost, and therefore any linguistic effort would be vain. To transform language as a substitute into an authentic experience, at once primordial and final in relation to that substitute, there must be an experience which opens up from within to receive a specifically cultural content, just as the earth opens up to receive a seed and makes it germinate, otherwise the genetic information is irremediably lost.

As is suggested by the passage from fig. 43 to fig. 44, the readiness of experience to receive its original content implies that this content is able, not only to substitute itself for any language situation, but also to be the basis of any language situation, and to make it a provisional substitute, so that it is possible to reverse the order of figures 42 to 44, passing from a cultural situation (fig. 44) to a language situation contained in an autonomous experience (fig. 42). Thus the substitution of a cultural situation for a language situation and vice versa implies an original, authentic content that belongs to the cultural experience. But before we examine this specifically cultural content, we must explain how experience opens up to receive it.

INTERNAL OPENING

Experience may be called cultural insofar as it opens up to receive a content, which we have compared to a seed that it cultivates and causes to germinate. In Chapters 13 and 14 we will examine the opening of experience to its external context, for it goes without saying that experience is not only a container, but also a content. For the time being we will concentrate on the internal opening of experience. In each case experience appears as a form, open either from within or toward the outside. Its internal opening gives it the appearance and the properties of a hollow, enveloping form which is immaterial and has no substance of its own, for its function is that of assimilating a content.

Unlike the language situation, which attributes objective function to things indicated by signs, the cultural situation has neither an object nor a subject of its own, associated with intermediate levels of perception and signification, but only two elements which, in relation to each other, may become the container and the content reciprocally. Cultural experience thus has the privilege of incorporating a content without recourse to intermediaries and, since the limits of experience set limits to the content, of enlarging and renewing it by opening up a passage for the external context, the container of experience. As a container, experience ensures its authenticity, for it has no intermediaries and can substitute itself for

any secondhand experience; as the content of an external context, it ensures its originality by opening up a passage for the container, which extends beyond it infinitely.

We have avoided giving experience a psychological, biological or epistemological definition because, in the light of a cultural situation, it can be defined only in relation to what it contains and to what contains it. It can be known and measured only by its degree of opening; it has value only insofar as it substitutes its content for any other and exchanges its internal context for its external context. In other words, it has no identity, reality or value of its own, but it enjoys the privilege and takes the initiative of conferring identity, reality and value upon the container or the content to which it opens up. In a cultural situation we must avoid confusing experience with its content and its container, as certain aspects of the word "experience" may induce us to do; on the contrary, it appears devoid of substance, like a glance, or negative, like the opening of a window, a double opening which permits breathing, exchange, balance, cultural unity.

Unlike language, which has a host of elements with a very complex system of interaction, culture has only two elements: experience and its internal and external contexts; the same elements may pass from the internal to the external context without changing their nature. Experience serves as a witness to data which, without it, would not be data at all, for there would be nothing to contain them. The data base their authenticity on the opening of experience, which is pure form.

It is however conceivable that a form may have two ways of opening, inwardly and outwardly, by hollowing and widening out. In view of this duality, we have represented experience as a ring (figures 42 and 44), a form which is both convex and concave. The same data may appear either inside or outside the ring; their position in a cultural situation is determined or chosen by experience. Thus the extension of the ring (and in particular the extension of its internal opening) becomes the only arbitrary element of a cultural situation. It does not alter the data themselves in any way, but it varies their aspect depending on whether they contain experience or are contained by it. This means that cultural experience, being also human experience, cannot assimilate an infinite content, for it reflects a particular situation in time, society and the world. However, its limitations are compensated by its ability to open up not only to a minute content, but also to the whole of the content which extends beyond it and encircles it on all sides. What is arbitrary is not the form of experience, so long as it is an open form, but its variable extension, the aspect which it gives the data by making them appear either as the content or as the container.

In the extension and movement of experience we see also the specifically human element of a cultural situation. Limited as it is, experience hollows out a form within the data and inserts itself into the vacancy as a minute container, but it is not enough for it to hollow itself out: it must fill the vacancy with equivalent data. For the empty space it has hollowed out it then substitutes an experience content which must have exactly the exchange value of what it takes from the container. The internal opening gives cultural value to the data it contains, substituting them for the data external to experience.

When we say that experience is pure form, we mean that it remains in itself, independently of its content and of its container, purely arbitrary in the sense that it cannot give itself as a content without losing all its justification. It exists only by virtue of its double opening, that is to say the exchange it permits between its content and its container, an exchange which is the basis of all cultural value. Unlike culture, language has only to attribute a sense to the content which it transmits, but this sense has a value of its own and takes the place of the content: language gives its sense to its own content, hence the independent character of language in relation to the identity and reality for which it serves as an intermediary and which can very well do without it. Language is mediate in relation to its own data; we have even emphasized the fact that it eliminates them, as it were, as soon as it puts them into a language situation, in which we no longer need to concern ourselves with data external to the action of language, but with the reality signified. But things are different in the case of cultural experience, which cannot possibly constitute a content by means of a sense. The only sense that it can confer upon its data is their situation in relation to experience, be it content or container, and to the exchange value between its internal and external data.

Unlike language, which constitutes for itself a sense independent of its data, rejecting them by transmission, culture comes into being as soon as its mode of perception opens up to a content which it can exchange only for data that escape from it and go beyond it. Whereas the escape from the hermetism characteristic of any language situation consists in extending the network of signification to the conscious subject and the determined object, the escape brought about by culture is far more radical, for it strips experience of any sense of its own and opens it up to a content which goes beyond it. The miracle of culture lies in the fact that it can give value to a content in relation to experience by emptying itself of any content of its own. Thus the internal opening is bound up with a validating operation based on the substitution of data of experience for external data; it is the result of an engagement of experience—pure form without content—in the environment of the external data. Paradoxically,

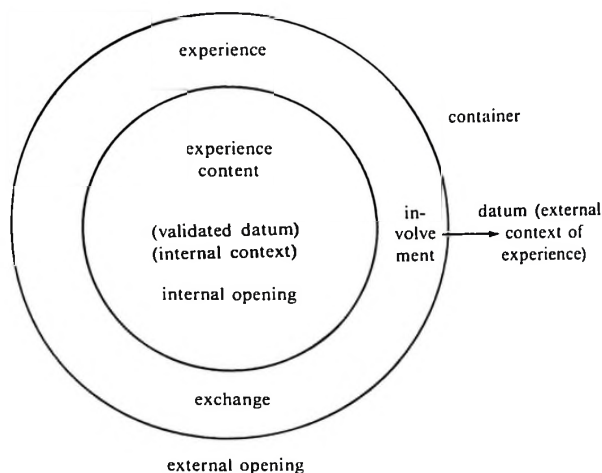
the most direct way of escape starts from the engagement of an experience absolutely devoid of substance and significance in an environment which is validated by its presence.

Thus the exchange made by experience between its external and internal data differs from the substitution of an equivalent experience content for a language situation (fig. 43). Since the datum of a language situation is nothing but the content that is transmitted by the sense, substitution consists in a reinterpretation of that content. Thus placed in a cultural situation, the content confirms or invalidates its linguistic sense according as it is equivalent to the experience content or, on the contrary, cannot be substituted for it. As an intermediary, language has a sense of its own and consequently, what culture substitutes for it remains outside the scope of language: it is the datum which lends itself to immediate experience only. Cultural exchange, whereby two contents are constituted—one internal and the other external in relation to immediate experience—substitutes a well-tried datum (experience content) for one in which experience is not involved. Culture validates the datum by involving experience in it.

The experience content must be identical with the datum which it validates; it is enough for the language content to be equivalent to the experience content for it to be substituted for it. The substitution is brought about by means of a sense; the exchange is immediate, for the experience content must be absolutely identical with the datum which it validates by its involvement. The language situation implies a datum which is not necessarily identical with the one it transmits, for the sense which it gives itself aims precisely at enabling that datum to escape; on the contrary, the cultural situation is involved in the datum which, by opening up inwardly, it endeavours to capture. This leads us to add to the preceding figures the unlimited dimension of the datum in Figure 45.

For the exchange between its internal and external contexts to take place, experience must be represented as a transparent form (whereas language substitutes a sense for a content in order to transmit it). This transparency, which permits both the exchange and the internal opening, gives unlimited value to the limited experience content, for this limited content is exchanged for unlimited data which remain external but are never excluded, as is the case in a language situation which interposes its own sense.

Whereas a language situation gives no indication and even less guarantee of its own bases (for it excludes the datum, which is not included in the network of signification), the nonlinguistic cultural situation secures its own bases and, by substitution, those of language, by opening up inwardly both to the extra-linguistic datum and to culture. Language, in

Figure 45

this sense, is based on culture and justified by it, but the opposite is not true, for the content of cultural experience is not necessarily substituted for the whole of the language situation. Only cultural experience can verify whether the sense of language corresponds to the datum which it excludes. As language does not include its own verification, it needs the involvement of experience in the datum.

This applies both to descriptive language, whose object refers to a reality, and to expressive language, whose object takes the place of an identity. Owing to the involvement of experience which is at once limited and limiting, the internal opening will leave room for two types of content: one is opened up by the involvement itself and implies an identity belonging to the data of experience, while the other is the content to which experience opens up when it is involved in it, namely the reality of the datum. We avoid the terms "object" and "subject" here, for they can take on the same sense only in a linguistic context. The identity and the reality, which will be examined in Chapters 11 and 12, are conceived as two distinct aspects of the internal context, the first being subjective in relation to experience which involves an identity, and the second being objective in relation to experience which opens up a reality. The distinc-

tion between an identity and a reality which are complementary to each other does not apply in the case of the external context, insofar as experience is not involved in it.

LIMITATION OF THE EXPERIENCE CONTENT

Since experience is a pure formal quality, its functions have no effect upon the nature, quality and substance of the experience content; it does however determine the extension and form of that content. In opening up as a pure form to a limited content, experience takes its place within a context which circumscribes it; this context is of the same nature as the content and is therefore interchangeable with it.

The limitation which experience imposes on its context in opening up to its limited content does not in any way deprive that context of universality: on the contrary, it makes it infinitely replaceable by exchanging it arbitrarily for the external content of experience. The result of this exchangeability is that the limitations to which experience subjects its content (choice of time, intentions, individual circumstances, means of experience, etc.) are equivalent to the measure of their universality. A specifically cultural function, experience raises the individual, the unique and the circumstantial to the level of what is universally valid. What can be exchanged for the external context of experience is valid in this sense. Insofar as it is limited by the conditions and the involvement of experience, the content is unique, individual, isolated and existential; insofar as it is part of a context external to experience, the same content is universally valid, and in this it implies the double opening of experience.

The experience content acquires a cultural character and an exchange value as soon as it loses its unique, individual and irreplaceable character in favor of one that is universal in the sense of indefinitely exchangeable. Thus the sense of measure seems to us to be inseparable from culture, and it is opposed to any attempt to inflate experience to the point of giving it an unlimited content. For example, the music of Richard Wagner and Anton Bruckner may appear intolerable to certain listeners on account of its excessive, immoderate and constantly solemn character: a state of exhaustion follows more than an hour's listening, which in fact needs the support of fanatical ecstasy, and the result is a void which a more measured form of musical expression would fill. It may be observed that a feeling of satisfaction always consists in placing a measured, modest, simple and accessible content in a universal context that validates it.

The function of experience is not to extend its content beyond all reasonable bounds, but to validate the content that it limits. At the outset, this content is thus limited to the particular circumstances, the conditions, the involvement of experience, and its necessarily reduced opening.

THE FOUNDATION OF EXPERIENCE

Since experience is always limited to unique, individual circumstances, it implies an external context which circumscribes it at every moment of its involvement. There is no point in our examining here the limits of perception, imagination or intelligence, but we must take into account the structure of any cultural situation, in which experience can open up to a limited content only and can therefore be founded neither on its external context, which escapes from it, nor on its content, which it limits arbitrarily.

Cultural value can be based only on an exchange between the internal and external contexts of experience. Since the experience content itself is derived from the external context, it is validated by a constantly renewed involvement of experience, based on communication and substitution of the contents and their exchange for others which have not yet been tried out. Thus, experience cannot have a final content or an absolute form; it can base itself on irrefutable foundations only if it is endlessly involved. Hence its dynamic character, which is that of a historic event. The final content of a dogma or the absolute form of a system are situated outside culture and history, but they thereby lose any chance of being founded and verified, for they prevent the free and endless involvement of experience.

As the experience content is not a sufficient foundation, it has to question itself constantly by assimilating new contents derived from the external context; its form is polyvalent, communicable and provisional; its repeated or continuous involvement enables it to pass from one content to another, and thus to base itself no longer on its content, but on an approach to its unlimited container. By its involvement it ultimately reaches the point of approximate concordance between its content and its container, which alone can give it a well-founded mode of action.

It would therefore be vain to seek a fixed and final cultural foundation, which would imply a unique, incommunicable content. There is no foundation other than the permanent involvement of experience in cultural situations varied to the point of warding off the danger of choosing an arbitrary form. Paradoxically, experience is all the more unsure of itself because it is aware only of its own content, and it is all the more solidly founded because it gets rid of all that it can become aware of by itself without departing from its own content. Thus its involvement causes it to deny itself continually, otherwise it loses contact with the context which lies beyond experience. Its own content offers no guarantee of authenticity; it is vouched for only insofar as it can be communicated and exchanged for what experience is unaware of and does not contain. Since its *raison d'être* lies in its communicability, experience has to give up its content in order to retain its form. Therefore, what it transmits is

not its content, as in the case of language, but a form which survives several contents, for any content is ultimately a mere substitute for the external context which always escapes it.

Thus, culture consists in a tradition of forms with a renewable content. If the content is not renewed, the tradition dies out. Cultural experience lives through its involvement; it calls itself into question perpetually, for it is based not on its own content, but on the exchange of its content for what denies it, for what it can never become aware of. At the same time this abnegation secures the foundations of cultural experience within its own opposite: the context which circumscribes it and prevents it from becoming aware of more than its own content.

Two types of examples illustrate the power of experience to go beyond its limits through renewed involvement: on the one hand, the principle of verification and revisability by which scientific experience is made universally applicable; on the other hand, the fact that a sentiment assumes cultural value as soon as it can be shared by any other person that becomes aware of it. In each case experience justifies itself by confronting its internal context with what goes beyond its field of action and is not perceived or felt by it directly, but through intermediaries, as it were.

Let us take each of these cases separately. Scientific experience implies a reality which is interposed between the unknowable datum and the experience content. Experience takes a form which suits not only a particular content, but above all any content derived from a reality that is available whenever experience is repeated and involved afresh. The reality which scientific experience needs is obviously not the datum itself, for this escapes all experience, including scientific experience, but it may be said to form part of the datum which circumscribes it, for it cannot come from anywhere but the context external to experience. By renewing its involvement experience thus manages to open itself to series of contents which, at the limit, constitute the scientific reality, though this nevertheless remains circumscribed by an unfathomable datum. Thus, scientific experience may be conceived as an entity interposed between the limited contents to which experience opens up and in which it is involved, and the integral datum to which experience can never hope to have access, for it is at once limited to contents of a real type. The datum does not comply with any condition of experience and thus escapes any scientific investigation, for it is situated on the fringe of scientific reality, which is predetermined by the universal application of one and the same form of experience. For example, an algebraical equation must be applicable to any kind of reality that corresponds to its formula, but it is obvious that all the possible applications of algebra are based only on a verifiable reality, that is to say on a limited experience content, and not on the datum, to which no

experience is applicable, for it will always go beyond the most universal field of application.

The second example of the foundation of experience by transcendence seems at first to be more difficult to explain, for it is not a case of the application of abstract forms, but of affective involvement of the person. The more unique and irreplaceable the person, the more he asserts himself. As an experience content, therefore, he cannot be substituted for anyone else without depriving experience of its foundation. Consequently, instead of applying itself to new contents, experience is founded on the identity of the persons, which implies that the differences and the uniqueness of the persons correspond to a common foundation of experience, a primordial content which we will call identity. Insofar as the person is integrated with an identity common to other persons, he lays the foundation of his experience of himself and thereby gives up his uniqueness. A person's experience of himself is therefore verifiable only if other persons can identify themselves with him. But this identification can be made possible only by an intermediary. Thus a person's experience of himself is based on his transcendent movement toward a common identity. However, this identity is not only interposed between several persons: it also serves as an intermediary between the persons as they understand themselves and the data which escape all affective or spiritual experience. Thus, mythological, tragic or comic personages do not permit us to identify ourselves with them completely, even though they have characteristics which are common to all men; in order to be true they must also take part in a play which they do not control. To whom do they belong if they do not belong to themselves?

This raises the question of the external context which escapes all self-experience; it implies a reference to all that is situated beyond any means of identification, any possible content of self-experience. The foundation which is common to all men, the primordial identity in which they recognize themselves and the personages with whom they identify themselves are thus mere intermediaries between self-experience and what extends beyond it. But as long as these intermediaries participate in the context external to all self-experience, they place the latter on a basis which is independent of any personal, subjective or arbitrary considerations. It is not enough for us to recognize ourselves in the personages whose parts we act: they must be involved in the play, whose producer is unknown to us. God? The Spirit? In a cultural context, these hypotheses do not follow from the involvement of identities in parts which, after all, do not belong to them, but which are the basis of our experience of those identities. Faith strengthened by adversity is evidence of a strong personality, but even the strongest personality has its place in a context which

extends beyond it. Some people will say that it owes its strength to the spirit which inspires it. The ordeal of life leads us closer not only to a higher identity, but also to the inexhaustible, unfathomable source of every singular, unique identity. Self-experience cultivates the person by bringing back its individual singularity to the source of all identity.

Just as self-experience leads by way of identity to the single, common source of all singularity, the experience of otherness leads by way of reality to the basis of all involvement in the unfathomable data. In each case, cultural value has its basis in the internal opening and in the involvement of experience in its external context.

SELF-EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIENCE OF OTHERNESS

Our examination of the foundations of experience has necessitated a distinction between self-experience and experience of otherness, a distinction which we must now explain more precisely. Our models of the two fundamental language situations provide us with an analogous distinction, but while language establishes the distinction between the object and the subject of its own accord, the initial model of the cultural situation (fig. 44) does not necessarily lead to an analogous distinction, at least at first sight. We have intentionally chosen the simplest possible model in order to start from the fundamental elements of culture; in fact, we have chosen it expressly in view of its extreme simplicity, but it goes without saying that, on closer examination, its elements may reveal an unexpected complexity. Moreover, simplicity and complexity are complementary: the double spiral of the model of genetic interaction of Crick and Watson makes astonishing precision and differentiation possible.

The difference between self-experience and experience of otherness is explained only by the double nature of experience itself, for within the limits of a cultural situation, experience constitutes the prior element which determines the form and takes in a content. We already know that this content has two different aspects, namely, identity and reality, and we must look for what, in experience itself, determines and justifies this difference.

Cultural experience, as we have taken care to detach it from an epistemological context, has the function of interposing itself between an external context and a content. This context in itself is neither objective nor subjective: it is simply the content whose form is called experience. But experience differs in its nature according to whether it is informed from within or from without. Let us make this clear. The information we receive through our senses is double inasmuch as it tells us what we perceive and at the same time how we perceive it. What we perceive refers to what, provisionally, we call objects or things, but our sensations and

perceptions have a seat which is ourselves. For example, sensory perception informs us about certain qualities of things: heat and cold, hardness, shape, distance, colour, sound etc., but the qualities we attribute to things are perceived by means of the senses we attribute to living beings; we attribute them above all to ourselves, but we find that others, too, perceive sensations of cold, heat, etc., albeit differently.

We also find that the qualities of things bring about transformations: under the effect of cold, water turns into ice. Systematic study of these transformations enables us to foresee them apart from any direct sensory perception, so that we create for ourselves information which is independent of the condition in which we place it and is exclusively related to the qualities and transformations of things. Unlike living beings, things thus become a content of information which is brought in from outside.

Are things different from living beings in themselves, or only insofar as they inform experience from without, whereas living beings inform it from within? To answer this question, we must formulate it more precisely. We hesitate to use vague categories, such as animal, vegetable and mineral, for several reasons: even though they seem to correspond to certain intrinsic qualities, there are borderline cases, that is to say a vague transition from one category to another. Moreover, we have no proof that an animal endowed with sensory perception is capable of making a distinction between what informs it from within or from without, and consequently of being aware of its identity as a species and as an individual. It seems to us to be impossible to base a distinction between living beings and things on their intrinsic qualities. The sciences which are concerned with living beings (biology, anthropology, medicine, etc.) still have to overcome many prejudices based on an absolute distinction and, in particular, on belief in the integrity of the living being: it is enough to mention the prejudices against the dissection of the human body. Scientific research goes to the point of constructing cybernetic models which imitate the working of the human brain, and there is no reason to suppose that it cannot continue in this way or that it will have to call a halt before the last taboos, but this triumphal march does not push back the frontier between living beings and things: we may even say that it leaves it intact and is not concerned with it, for it studies living beings as if they were things. This last remark gives us a first element for our answer: both living beings and things may be the object of scientific research, which goes on as if the distinction between living beings and things were not due to their intrinsic qualities, but to the difference between the information coming from without and from within experience. The result is that only the information coming from outside can be the object of scientific research, which thus rejects any other category of information. It is indeed a case of a category of information and therefore of a distinction based on the

nature of experience, and not on the nature of living beings and things. The fact that self-experience or, if it be preferred, the living being's awareness or perception through itself, has to give up all scientific pretensions, does not in any way affect its validity, that is to say, the authenticity of the information received by it from within.

Emotions, sentiments and passions are facts in the same way as perceptions, and though they tell us hardly anything about the nature of things, they do reveal or betray us. It is not impossible to subject them to scientific examination, but such examination compels us to take up a position outside ourselves, in other words to strip ourselves of what constitutes our identity. But it cannot be denied that emotions, sentiments and passions are experienced from within and come from an inalienable experience constituting a field in which the frontiers of science come to an end.

However, one cannot deny all complementarity between self-experience and experience of otherness, especially as, in certain cases (sensory perception, for example), the same experience leads both to observations of the scientific type and to self-awareness through oneself. Scientific research depends on the human resources which it mobilizes, and affective life proceeds in an environment which is influenced by scientific activity. But we cannot content ourselves with these vague confirmations. The source of this complementarity is to be found only in the double foundation of experience, which always involves an identity in a reality, giving them value by confronting them with their external context. As experience is twofold, the identity and the reality differ on account of their divergent origins and can converge only in the external context of experience, which does not prevent any identity from being involved in an adequate, real content or, reciprocally, any reality from having a corresponding content of identity. This means that every cultural situation has a hybrid or ambivalent character: on the one hand, any identity is incarnate; on the other hand, any reality involves an awareness of reality, so long as we conceive of identity and reality as experience contents and as elements of a cultural situation. We have no intention of writing a philosophical work or, in particular, of arriving at a double ontology of identity in itself and of reality in itself. We understand the terms of identity and reality as they are based on the ambivalent nature of cultural experience, just as the terms of object and subject take on a restricted, precise sense when they refer to a language situation. Either culture, like language, has a structure of its own, or there is a diversity of unfounded cultures. We have chosen the former hypothesis and have so far found no reason to abandon it. Even though it is not entirely based on epistemology or psychology, our notion of ambivalent experience none the less constitutes the basis and the origin of the distinction between

identity and reality as experience contents, and also of their reciprocity. Self-experience and experience of otherness call for different, reciprocal contents.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF EXPERIENCE

Insofar as political conflicts have their repercussions in the world of culture, the meaning of cultural involvement becomes contradictory. "Committed" literature ultimately loses all cultural value when it allows itself to be guided by political motives. These two remarks suggest that culture's field of action has a character of its own and that the involvement of cultural experience complies with well-defined conditions.

It is necessary, above all, to define the possibilities and the limits of a cultural action, making a fairly clear distinction between acquired culture and active culture.

The cultural acquisition has two aspects, according as it consists in an information of experience coming from within or from without. The internal information is represented by a discipline of the imagination and a self-knowledge which are the mark or the result of patient, conscious formation. The external information is represented by the knowledge and competences which are derived from patient observation. The cultural acquisition is the result of an action, that is to say of an involvement, which we consider to be essential to the exercise of culture. Without this involvement experience has no chance of finding a foundation and surpassing itself.

It remains for us to define the type of action which is specifically cultural. Once again we are led to make a distinction between action upon oneself, that is to say, upon the conscience and the will, and action on things which are independent of the human conscience and will. Acting upon oneself, on the one hand, means no longer only being, but being perceived; action upon things, on the other hand, means no longer taking events or phenomena as they occur, but as they are supposed to occur. The incidence of experience involved upon its own content thus appears as the principle of a modification which needs to be examined more closely.

To explain the principle of the internal action (or the involvement of self-experience), we might take as our basis the idea of Berkeley, *esse est percipi*, though without using it for ontological purposes and misappropriating it. We will, however, merely remark that there is a fundamental difference between being and being perceived, in the sense that "being" does not imply culture, whereas "being perceived" implies intervention on the part of experience. In what respect can experience change the living being? If, through fatalism or resignation or by virtue of a generalized

determinism, we believe that a living being cannot be changed in any way and that it therefore constitutes a datum on which experience cannot exert any influence, we are bound to regard culture as a sort of sham, superfluous ornament. In this case, it is culture as an acquisition that comes into its own and responds to a *status quo* situation; it is just as if chance, necessity, routine, instincts and reflexes held sway over the living being and there were no possibility of changing that state of affairs. To be logical this attitude or belief must ultimately reduce culture to the rank of a mere acknowledgment of impotence, of an activity without hope or foundation, without justification or efficacy, which it would be better to do without. But who can adopt such an attitude without profoundly changing his self-awareness? To affirm that experience is useless is to undermine the foundations of affirmation: it amounts to self-contradiction. Logically, experience changes the being in which it is engaged, and the conditions of this involvement exclude a static conception of acquired culture; this is conceivable only as something active. It does not act in the same way as a physical force, an instinct or compliance with orders: it is the content in which it is involved that is changed by the form which acquired culture gives it, and this form, whether arbitrary or well-founded, is nothing but experience or, in the case which concerns us here, self-awareness. This self-awareness can never embrace the entire being: it acts only on the content to which it opens up; it is limited in time and by circumstances, like any action; but its dynamic and continuous involvement confirms or invalidates it, and it lays hold not only of its existing content, but also of the flux of the living being, acting on the very modalities of the being, just as a form with a moving content prevents it from overflowing. Autonomy, self-control and self-mastery: such are the possible effects of inner perception.

The principle of external cultural action (or involvement of the experience of things) also comes back to the intervention of an element of awareness, but with this essential difference that it is not in the sphere of the living being that awareness is involved, but in various contexts of the datum as it can be perceived as external to the person who acquires experience of things. Perception of any kind gives information both about the observer and about the things he observes. In the latter case, observation must, in order to be adequate, be reduced to verification: here again it is argued that experience of things does not change them, and the consequence of this is that all scientific culture is ultimately vain. Without engaging in this sterile controversy, we will simply remark that scientific culture, too, is active if only by virtue of its autonomous development: every science has contents and forms of its own and develops step by step. Though its objects are not changed, the knowledge of its objects progresses, extends and becomes more precise—in a word, it changes. But it

also acts in another way: like self-experience, experience of things ensures control and mastery of its contents. If this is really the case, it can no longer be affirmed that all scientific culture is ultimately vain, at any rate as long as there is no slackening of control.

Thus the involvement of experience differs according to the nature of its contents, but our brief theoretical outline enables us to discern a constant: mastery of the field of action of experience through the elaboration of plans which cover, in the case of self-experience, the modalities of the being and, in the case of experience of things, its interchangeable contents of reality. This procedure permits the universalization of experience. Moreover, by virtue of the double orientation of experience, self-mastery is unavailing without mastery of things, and vice versa, which induces us to advance the hypothesis of an interpenetration of the contents of experience. Why should self-experience not extend to things, and why should experience of things not extend to living beings?

Here are two examples in support of this hypothesis. The painter who sets up his easel before a landscape—let us say a very tall tree, left standing alone in the middle of a clearing—will start by thinking of a theme suggested to him by this first impression. An invisible, inscrutable process of gestation develops within him. The result may be a figuration in which the motif that he has before him is recognizable, or all that is left of the tree may be an elongated splash of color dominating the picture. In either case the artist will have expressed himself, but he will also have found a motif or a pretext before him: his experience has extended to the world of things.

The second example refers to scientific research. It is evident that the object of the so-called natural sciences is not to give us information about man, but it is equally evident that their mode of action is that of man. Besides, there is nothing to prevent us from regarding man as a part of nature and studying him in the same way as any object, which means that he is capable of taking up a point of view external to himself. He will not be able to grasp his awareness of himself in this way, for he sees himself from outside, but there is nothing to prevent him from examining the manifestations and modalities of the living being as if they were things. Medicine, biology, psychology and sociology, for example, cannot do without an analogous examination. The interpretation of the contents of experience shows that it is not so much the nature of those contents that makes them different as the ambivalent nature of experience itself.

As consequences of the interpenetration of the contents of experience, the two cultures which are distinguished by C. P. Snow—the sciences and the humanities—cannot ignore each other without becoming sterile. Either they fertilize each other mutually or, each of them isolating itself, specializing and cultivating its differences, the involvement of experience

becomes anarchical and ultimately loses all its efficacy. When culture is kept in a closed compartment, it is condemned to inaction and takes the form of a gratuitous exercise which has no incidence on the real: art for art's sake, on the one hand, and academic research on the other.

When culture loses its solidarity and no longer commits itself it also loses all its spiritual authority, all its political influence, and all its power to change the society in which it exercises itself in a closed compartment. A materialistic society, subject to forces which escape any cultural control, implies a museum culture, stagnant, inefficacious and sterile. Today thousands of scientific research workers are employed by the armaments industries and the most violent regimes find all the parrots they need for broadcasting their ideologies. The lack of cultural solidarity is compensated by controversy and the proliferation of conflicting doctrines. A place apart is reserved for an anaemic, devitalized and remote classical culture, which is accessible to a sedentary, exclusive elite, protected by dry-as-dust scholars. In these circles people speak of culture as if they knew what it was, as if it were culture acquired once and for all, an inalienable and unchangeable asset. Outside these circles, culture meets only with indifference and contempt or, if it can be used for barbarous ends, people make it say whatever they wish.

Committed culture becomes troublesome, for it implies not only creative freedom, but also a grasp of the real, not only political detachment, but also a political influence, not only social criticism, but also social action, not only spiritual authority, but also a spiritual life. It interferes with any political, religious and institutional authority. It upsets the established order.

The establishment of an immutable classical culture, free from vicissitudes and finally labeled according to periods and styles, runs up against the perpetual calling into question that is implied by creative effort, as well as the shifts of perspective or accent that are implied by the involvement of culture in its successive historical contexts. If the sacred art of the High Middle Ages has an originality of its own, it cannot be envisaged either as a decadence of Antiquity or as a first stammering of the Romanesque. A recent work dealing with this art¹ shows that this originality cannot be diminished by deterministic explanations or by purely esthetic considerations; to understand this art, one must understand the double context which makes it at once so unique and so isolated: "At the beginning of the sixth century, St Avit maintained that Lyons was defended more effectively by its basilicas than by its ramparts. He was thinking of the four suburban churches situated at the gates of the town: they had the same 'prophylactic' character as that which Paolo

¹ André Corboz, *Haut Moyen Âge*. Office du Livre, Fribourg 1970.

Verzone attributed to the six Chapels of the Angels that were laid out according to the cardinal points round Milan Cathedral, before the eighth century. The scope of these measures gives us cause for reflection if we forget that the enemy often believed in them too and acted in the same way."² The same forms as in other periods—basilica or nave—take on a particular meaning: they express at the same time an experience of the sacred and the precarious situation in which it is involved. To read a monument, it is not enough to "let the stones speak for themselves": one must try to repeat the experience to which they bear witness. But this experience remains living by virtue of its indomitable originality: it is explained neither by a technical necessity nor by a geographical chance; no determinism and no dialectic account for it; the unique context has disappeared; it still manifests its autonomy.

The involvement of experience in a particular historical context makes it unique and limited, but its involvement gives it a foundation, strengthens it and endows it with the continuity of a living tradition which ultimately detaches it from its context. The history of the arts cannot be deduced from the laws of physics, nor can a scientific discovery be explained by geographical data. Experience is original and primary in relation to its content. In itself, history has no sense; at most the historian discerns in it relations of causality—"structures," as we call them today—which are more or less autonomous, more or less independent. A sense is not composed of a sum of limited causalities, even if, by extrapolation, we conclude that a general causality exists.³ At once container and content, history—unlike prehistory, but what do we know of it?—is marked by an involvement to which the historian cannot remain indifferent if he wants to give it a sense; he has to repeat in it the same experience in his own way, make it current, and put it into a cultural situation. Whether he likes it or not, he involves it again in a contemporary context. History enriches the present: a present without history is as lifeless as a plant without roots. It must however be made clear that we are using the word "history" in the sense which it assumes in a cultural situation: as the container and the content of cultural experience which is involved in this double context and pursues in it an activity independent of its successive contents, based on its external context, and ultimately free, that is to say, open to any new involvement.

²*Ibid.*, p. 175.

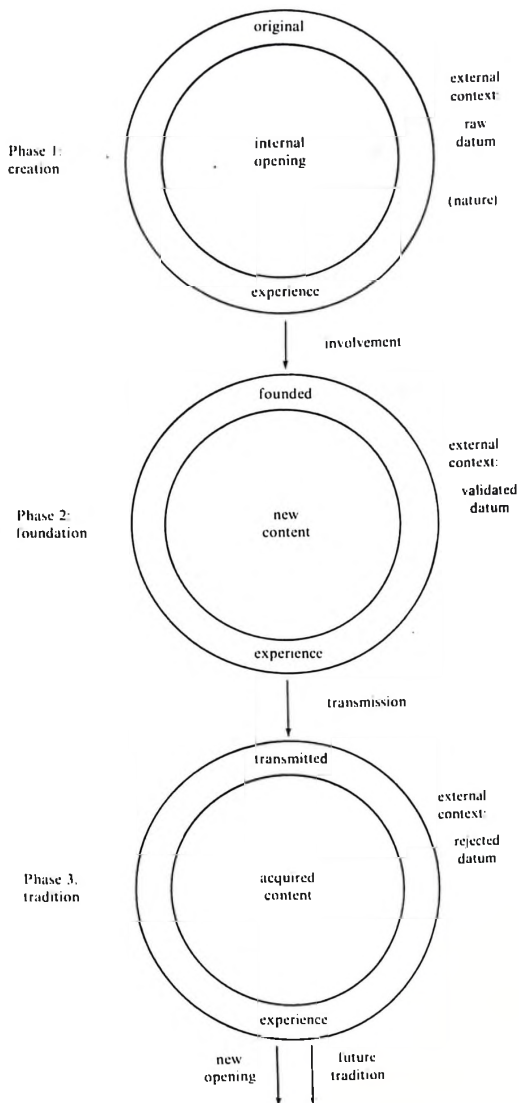
³The thesis that history is not a sum of facts and that it leads to intervention on the part of the historian is advanced in an article published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (21.5.1971, p. 578): "Namier devoted his last years to one enterprise—a vast encyclopaedia of Members of Parliament of all periods—whose value has yet to be demonstrated. Bricks are important. But a pile of bricks is not a house. And should the master-builder spend his time in a brick-field? Perhaps nemesis awaits the historian who seeks to expunge ideas from the historical process."

This opening distinguishes a cultural situation from a language situation, which is closed on its own form. A historical text has a structure of its own, but the message—if there is one—needs to be decoded: it escapes from the text, and in the reader goes once again along the road of experience. For the textual context it substitutes a new experience content which is at once original, insofar as it breaks free from the letter of the text, and well-founded, provided that the experience is not afraid of confrontation with a new context. Thus experience is the original, creative form of the content which it puts to the test; there is interdependence between form and content, between the experience involved and its data. No experience content will ever be sufficient: any content demands to be renewed by original experience. Cultural history cannot be circumscribed, for it manifests itself in a succession of original works and its content is inexhaustible. At the most we can discern its tendencies, its relationships and a few broad outlines, but its unforeseeable originality makes it a continuous movement involved in another continuous entity; namely, its own external context.

Everything happens as if culture did not exist, but for man nothing happens but what results from a prior internal opening. Experience respects its content, but it changes the quality of that content: *it is no longer the same* because, as an experience content, it comes into a cultural situation. The involvement establishes a tradition and engenders originality. It gives form and value to the datum. It is not an *a priori* that falsifies the data, but a prior form which can spring only from originality and can only continue through autonomous tradition; it is a form preceding any form, for it is not only its own commencement, but at the same time the validating principle of the historical context by which it is circumscribed.

To say that certain events have their origin in the Copernican revolution is to acknowledge that scientific experience, in respecting the datum, ensures a firmer and irrevocable grasp of reality, just as self-experience is the means of access to identity; unreal as the latter is, it needs to be created. Thus our model of the cultural situation represents no more than what may be called a "snapshot" of a movement, a static figuration of a dynamic process, that of involvement. In order to represent this we should have to break down the model into a certain number of phases or metamorphoses through which it passes; theoretically, for example, we might distinguish a phase of creation, a phase of foundation, and a phase of tradition, without according priority to any of them, for, as we have seen, opening to a new content implies the outcome of a tradition as a starting-point. These phases engender one another continuously. The threefold analytical model which we have chosen as being typical of this continuity is to be conceived as a single system of reciprocal modifications between experience and its contexts:

Figure 45 his



It should be pointed out that we are not attempting to describe a dialectical movement, much less a mechanical one: owing to the indeterminate character of the external context in relation to experience (indeterminate and unlimited, which prevents us from tracing a third circle), the latter first extracts from it a minute content which informs it, and then a series of contents which give it a foundation until it can start again from a series of acquired contents. In short, this model distinguishes an autonomous movement within an indeterminate movement, the former validating the latter and the latter giving a foundation to the former.

Let us choose the complex and undefinable relations between culture and society as a very general example of this double movement (our model makes no distinction between experiences and therefore contents of different kinds, in particular between self-experience and experience of things). A collective culture is taken here as a form of experience with varied contents, while a type of society which is perpetuated through several generations is taken as the external context. In this case, culture and society are interconnected, but we cannot reduce their relations to any determinism: culture develops autonomously while involving itself in society and basing itself upon it, whereas society is conditioned by culture only insofar as the latter forms the content of its experience. There is not sufficient interdependence for us to conclude that there is a causal relationship or even generalized reciprocity, but culture is autonomous in relation to society and is founded on its opening to a series of contents, while society is validated in so far as it responds to a well-founded involvement.

Thus, culture is at once involved in the society on which it depends, and autonomous in relation to the whole of the society which constitutes its external context. For example, the spirituality of the High Middle Ages, as expressed in the liturgy, the cult of relics, pilgrimages, sacred art, etc., has its place in a society of which we know but little, though some of its data (the Arab invasions and the sanguinary raids of the Vikings) suggest that this spirituality was not shared by the whole of society. It was nevertheless a formative element of society, and we may say of it that, in other respects, it has persisted down to our own times (though medieval society has been replaced by others), so that we can repeat the experience by involving it in a new context, by tradition and re-creation.

Contemporary cultural involvement seems to have a wider scope: breeding, vocational activity, political and social life, education and research. But are we more masters of our destiny than we were in the obscure conditions of the High Middle Ages? In any case, high spirituality is not our guide, and though the new science of sociology takes society as its object, it does not penetrate into the depths of our being. A measurable, quantifiable society would no longer be human. The share of

autonomous, and therefore cultural development remains extremely small, yet it is decisive. Our culture is supposed to be vaster, better distributed and above all, better founded, but it is divided. It is not enough to have a grasp of the real: one must also dominate oneself. Our devils are worse than the Vikings: two world wars seem to have left them unsatisfied. People used to believe that the devils would be exorcized by orthodoxy, and then by pure reason; but there came a time when, like Goya, they had to admit that reason had devils of its own.

By continually renewing its contents, the double involvement of self-experience and experience of things is tantamount to an ordeal of exorcism, purification and initiation. Just as water purifies itself by flowing, culture renews itself by pouring out its contents and drawing from the source of all freshness. The source and container of experience is not only nature, but also, of course, the spirit: our model of the language situation has this implication at least, by reason of the double orientation of experience, of two wells for what is perhaps the same water of truth, purity and freshness. How indeed should we know it if we did not continually drain off the contaminated contents?

Unlike the language situation, which is a form closed on itself and valid by reason of its coherence, the cultural situation remains open through all its phases. However efficacious and well-founded, the involvement of experience excludes neither the self-determination of experience nor the inviolable virginity of its external context. To analyze a cultural situation is to break it down into three successive phases at three simultaneous levels, but it is above all to repeat experience, thereby involving it in a context which transcends and renews it.

CULTURAL FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

In the context of a language situation, the words "freedom" and "responsibility" take on a special sense different from the definitions that may be given them in philosophy. The very nature of language implies creative freedom on the part of the subject and a relation between subject and object which goes from the expression of the subject by a signified element (in the case of expressive language) to the rational determination of objects (in the case of descriptive language). However, since language is only a substitute, it refers to the experience which precedes it: the freedom it implies is not a freedom peculiar to language but belongs to the experience from which a cultural situation comes. Therefore it is in the context of a cultural situation that we must examine the implications of the theme of freedom.

We may start from an observation that has already been made: the various spheres of culture have a certain autonomy. There are even

certain spheres in which everything is in suspense, in which we cannot foresee what will happen, except through participation in a future development. This would not be the case if culture did not come from inalienable experience and if all life were not a recommencement. Autonomy does not mean that a given sphere is totally independent of others or that it does not obey any internal rule. The autonomy of a particular sphere is due to the fact that it involves a particular type of experience.

However, before examining the different types of experience, we should do well to consider new general implications of experience, for the autonomy of the cultural spheres derives from it. One of the fundamental consequences of the involvement of experience is that it cannot be taken as a fact, a datum or an acquisition, but as an act: to understand experience, we need to go through it. It is its content that can manifest itself only in the form of acquired knowledge, for instance. It is useless to object that the experience on which this knowledge is based can be disregarded: one results from the other in such a way that they differ according to the nature of the experience. There is no doubt that experience has the power to act upon its content by giving it a form.

It remains to be known whether this power is free and, if so, in what sense it is free. If it is also entirely determined by external factors, the involvement of experience no longer has a sense or a result, for in any case it can have no effect on its content. An even more serious consequence would be failure to allow the least autonomy to the various spheres in which it is involved; this would, in fact, imply that it must be possible to include all spheres in a deterministic system. Such systems have been suggested, though one cannot say that they have led to conclusive results, for they necessarily disregard experience itself: they suppress the problem instead of solving it. This is the case of positivism, dialectic materialism and Marxism-Leninism, which are condemned to revise themselves insofar as experience leads to new data. Easier as it is to pronounce judgment on the contents of experience than on experience itself, this must nonetheless be taken into account. But a cultural situation implies the involvement of experience, and therefore a dynamic development (fig. 45 bis) of the relation between experience and its internal and external contexts, though it cannot be said that the one is determined by the others.

In order to understand the sense in which the involvement of experience is free, we will take the example of two cultural activities, one of them scientific and the other literary. Since the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century the study of industrial economy has emphasized the decisions taken by the heads of firms. In a given case it may examine scientifically the possible results of the various choices of

practical action. The head of a firm chooses with full knowledge of the facts, but the simplest of cases is so complex that he has to take the decision himself and assume responsibility for it. Thus we have the example of involvement which is irreducible and fraught with consequences. Is not any decision taken by any individual also, in a certain sense, taken freely (even though it is often founded rationally), and does it not involve a certain degree of responsibility, even though it has consequences only for the individual in question? It is not enough to say, after the event, that a decision was inevitable, that it can be explained perfectly or that it does not alter a predetermined order of things: it had to be taken, and this is the primordial fact which bears witness both to the necessity and the freedom of experience, two different aspects of the same act.

The other example comes from literary criticism, and more particularly from the practice known as explication of texts. There are many things to explain in a text, but even the most thorough explanation cannot replace true comprehension of it, that is to say, the experience for which it is substituted.

Attention to the text is demanding. A serious study will not neglect the slightest implication of the linguistic network constituted by a text, but a literary work refers more or less explicitly to a spiritual and social context toward which its attitude is more or less free, irreverent, or frankly hostile. Moreover, its transmission detaches it from that context, so that posterity receives the attitude itself, the spirit in which the work was conceived (as if its circumstances were no longer important), a form which seeks to take in a new content, an experience to be gone through again.

To believe that a text can be understood and explained rationally is to believe that it is of its period and is not in the least autonomous; it is to harbor the illusion that one can resurrect the past by reconstituting the text. If, in fact, the past were inevitable, there would be no reason for its passing! It would be enough to demonstrate its *raison d'être* in order to protect it from the passing of time. But we are bound to admit that a work might not exist, and that it might not necessarily contain what a rationally-minded person would expect or deduce from a particular period. Furthermore, there would be no interest in studying a work only for the purpose of demonstrating that it contained nothing surprising. A work that is determined and explained by its context is outdated as soon as that context has disappeared; it communicates nothing but what is already in its context.

If a work is transmitted to us, it is for us to confront its sense and form with our experience, which is necessarily situated in a new context. To reconstitute the original context would be an aberration; if the author's

experience has any interest for us, it is only insofar as it is detached, so to speak, from that context, which is destined to fade out; in order to reach us it must be capable of reincarnation in a new period and, at the same time, of manifesting a certain autonomy in regard to any new context. This kind of transmission implying autonomous experience obviously has nothing in common with a relation of cause and effect. Because it is free, experience must be gone through again, independently of the form and even the sense of the work. This observation is all the more troubling, as any autonomy implies retirement within oneself and limitation, and these, precisely, are essential characteristics of inner experience. We are obliged to suppose that the world of inner experience—closed on its own content—permits a fusion of identities, and that the actual form of experience is perpetuated through various contents, otherwise there would be no transmission and no culture. This hypothesis does not come near to explaining the phenomenon of transmission. To go through experience again is not to repeat the same experience or to take it over on its own account; it is probable that the same work never has the same effect on the same person twice over, and even the most beautiful or convincing work does not always triumph over indifference or misunderstanding. Inexplicable and mysteriously autonomous experience is transmitted despite the vicissitudes of time. It is useless to enquire into its mechanism: one must commit oneself, decide, act, and judge in order to be in tune with a work which, above all, is an act.

To coincide with that of the author, the reader's experience does not place itself in the vanished context by which the text is partly explained, and it does not repeat the author's experience as such. Since the author's experience is autonomous, it follows that the text cannot be completely explained, that the reader must go through it again personally and that tradition does not lie in the transmission of texts, but in the reincarnation of experience. We rightly speak of "cultured persons," because culture is not in texts, but in persons.

A tradition implies not only a continuity of sense and form, but also a reopening and a new involvement of experience, in other words a free act on the part of persons who are equally autonomous and creative. Thus, a tradition has no better support than creation, provided that creation continues, revives, or renews it. The reader confines himself to keeping at a certain distance from the context of the original experience and to bringing himself into tune with that experience as faithfully as possible. Tradition takes on its full sense only when it is renewed by fresh personal acts; conversely, a cultural act has sense and efficacy only if it is integrated into a future tradition. This reciprocal fertilization of the creative act and the monument makes us doubtful of any mechanistic, evolutionistic or

purely rationalistic conception of culture: culture passes through more or less autonomous persons, manifests itself through more or less free acts, and might not exist at all.

Though founded on a series of contexts which renew it, tradition is made of unnecessary, and therefore free acts, depending on personal experience, which is somewhat autonomous in regard to its content and its external context. To the involvement of experience in its context, there thus corresponds a certain detachment, a displacement, and an autonomy enabling it to become an act and to create. Involvement gives it its foundation: autonomy gives it its motivation.

Tradition, in the active sense of cultural transmission, results from a motivation peculiar to the "cultured person" and leads to solidarity between the creative act and the monument, between the individual intentions and the great movements of history. To explain a work of value, one must go so far as to understand, by means of a creative act, another creative act that is rooted in a profound intentionality, which is tantamount to taking responsibility for the work, judging or rejecting it, for either one recognizes oneself in a work or one deprives oneself of what it offers, and in either case one assumes a responsibility. The cultural situation is not, like language, a game with its internal rules, which involves the person only insofar as he takes part in the game: the cultural situation involves the entire person, precisely because he is led to deepen his being, to find his foundations in a tradition, and to make himself autonomous to the extent to which he detaches himself from himself and from his context. At first sight involvement and autonomy seem to be opposites, in the same way as foundation and creative freedom. There is a contradiction only if the cultural situation is envisaged as a fact, and not as an act, as a game or substitute, and not as a responsibility.

The example of the explication of texts has brought us a very long way. Every text deserves unfailing attention to its letter and its spirit, but this attention is not enough. To really understand, one must act and consequently take liberties with the text. More than one teacher would frown on hearing this remark. Let us make ourselves clear. Artistic emotion cannot be explained, and the profound intention of a scientific discovery remains unfathomable. In either case one can only take over on one's own account what experience takes from its time; one can only renew experience to the point of taking full responsibility for it. Pupils make no mistake about this: alongside the text that has to be explicated, alongside the effect it produces (the theatrical effect of a dramatic work, for instance), one must not only take into account the action of the text through the generations, but also participate in that action, make oneself responsible for it and judge it. No one has the power to compel us to make

a judgment; no one can intervene in this intimate *tête-à-tête* with the author. The reader knows very well that it is he that is the ultimate judge; pending this personal judgment, he listens to the explication of the text and is mistrustful of arbitrary judgments.

An inspired teacher resembles the head of a firm who is aware of his responsibility; his decisions do not concern himself or his future. All he does is to pass on the handkerchief or the torch. It is not enough to give grounds for a judgment or decision: a judgment must bring about conviction, and a decision must be followed by action, which implies a certain freedom of opinion on the part of the pupils and a certain freedom of action on the part of the employees. Even if a judgment or a decision are binding, they imply for that very reason a measure of general assent and therefore a margin of personal freedom. In politics as in economics, in the artistic sphere as in that of science, one cannot encroach upon this margin of freedom which is constituted by autonomous experience; to do so would be to cause the source of all human activity to dry up. Planning and quantification have their limits.

Since the fields of inner experience are autonomous, personal and private, culture cannot be subjected to a purely rational examination. Similarly, it may be said that the knowledge of man, language and culture is not founded rationally, inasmuch as it affects freedom of opinion or action, which is an irreducible factor of indetermination. Experience cannot be known as an object and it cannot enter into a language situation: indeed, we have placed it outside any language situation that is substituted for the experience content. To know experience one must go through it; in other words, one must return to a private sphere in which free acts are possible. This private sphere is paradoxical, inasmuch as it preserves its autonomy all the better as it opens up to its context. It has its own rules and does not permit all free acts without distinction, but even makes an act all the freer as it is better founded. Just as freedom implies order and responsibility, creation implies foundation and tradition: the private sphere of cultural experience opens up not only to its context, but also to all persons. It is not private in the legal sense of the term (antonym: "public"); on the contrary, its sense is eminently public inasmuch as it claims an identity which is at once personal and universal.

Though it cannot be purely rational, the examination of cultural experience is governed nonetheless by the rules of a structure, which we have called the cultural situation. The rules are not internal as in the case of a language situation, which represents a self-contained structure: they are rather rules of interaction or contextual rules which, proceeding from the opening and involvement of experience, authorize both its freedom and its responsibility, both its autonomy and its universality, both creation and tradition.

CULTURAL CONSTANTS

Lamprotoxus flagellibarba, Sternoptyx diaphana, Linophryne arborifer: the fact that fishes living in the depths of the oceans are given such names is sufficient indication of the conventional, arbitrary character of language, but they also show that though language makes use of a convention to arrive at an objective description, it is nonetheless preceded by an experience of the strange, whose linguistic form is only an arbitrarily fixed convention, in relation to which the experience itself remains entirely free.

This fundamental freedom with which experience intrudes upon its context is the foundation of the cultural edifice. One cannot take the initiative of examining cultural structures scientifically without at once recognizing the limits imposed by this intrusion of experience. In the first three parts of this work, devoted to the linguistic foundations of culture, we clearly recognize that the metalanguage which is the theory of culture cannot form a science once its object gives evidence of creative freedom, for any science implies a determination of its object as it is oriented according to the corresponding language situation.

What offers resistance to a systematic theory or to a scientific metalanguage is not language or even languages as general, constituted structures, but living speech or personal style. As regards culture, we are led to make a distinction of the same kind as that between language and speech. We speak of general culture (school curricula take account of this notion) as a structured whole, common to certain groups or to a society and, as it were, fixed in generally recognized species. Any rational examination of this whole stops at the point where personal culture, that is to say individual practice and the play of variables, commences; but personal culture cannot be taught, though this is not a reason for denying its existence.

Our theory should be applicable both to culture as it is taught and to culture as it is practised. Have we here two opposite points of view in relation to the same object, culture *sub specie aeternitatis*, geometrized as it were, as opposed to culture broken down into acts which form a whole? If this were the case the separate acts would have no *raison d'être*, for they would only cut up and divide the pre-existing whole. Moreover a cumulative conception implies, as we have already seen, a quantitative relationship between the whole and its parts, as well as a deterministic relationship between the cause and its effects. As far as we know, no attempt to explain culture has managed to reduce it entirely to quantitative, logical relationships, whether by means of theology or of psychology. in the name of rationalism or empiricism, positivism or dialectics, structuralism or hermeneutics. A certain measure of agreement is to be

noted as regards the irreducible and "unquantifiable" character of culture, whose personal acts, if they are to have any sense, cannot be entirely explicable or determinate, but show an originality which, once again, calls the whole into question and modifies it.

Instead of concluding that there is a difference between a static or geometrical point of view and a dynamic one, we are inclined to see in these two opposite aspects of culture a precarious order which is continually destroyed and re-established by the acts which constitute it, but we must also attribute a certain freedom to those acts. If culture manifests the slightest freedom, the theory of culture is objective only in part and it becomes impossible to consider the phenomena of culture from outside, to keep them at a distance, and to detach oneself from them in order to adopt an entirely impartial and neutral attitude, as required for a scientific study.

The metalanguage of culture thus seems to be limited by the freedom of culture in action, and we are inclined to suppose that there are not two aspects of the same culture, one general and the other individual, one static and structured and the other dynamic, individual and separate, but two points of view which separately stress the two inseparable contexts of experience. Culture is at once the container and the content of experience. It implies an external context, which is the source of all experience but is situated outside its reach as long as there is no free involvement of experience, and an internal context which informs it, but forms only a minute part of the whole and which it is therefore condemned to exchange and replace continually in order to grasp to a slight extent the vast context that escapes it almost entirely.

One may examine language or culture as general structures abstracted from their manifestations, but it is obvious that a general study of language and speech, of general and personal culture is equally justified. One may even wonder whether in the case of culture the distinction is as sharp as it is between language and speech. What interests us is not the language of linguistics or the culture of the school curricula, a sum of knowledge acquired by a certain community. We have directed our attention to the whole of the associated phenomena of language and speech, to the language situation which implies and includes a measure of creative freedom, and lastly, to culture as it results from the opening and involvement of experience. The intervention of this factor, experience, at once excludes any entirely rational discourse on culture, desirable as it is to put a little order and method into this field.

In itself experience cannot be the object of an objective discourse, for it is an intrinsic factor of the discourse, not one of the objects to which the discourse refers. Once it intervenes in what we call a cultural situation, we have an equation in which an unknown element, namely experience,

falsifies the data and allows itself to be integrated only of its own accord, an equation which might be called personal or insoluble. By its opening and involvement, experience itself takes the initiative of integrating itself with its double context. Thus it is not for us to rule or order what culture must necessarily and inevitably be, to decide what it ought to be, or to describe its state of ideal or total perfection from a metaphysical, social, ethical or esthetic point of view. We limit ourselves to observing that the intervention of experience introduces a factor of uncertainty into any theory of culture, which does not by any means prevent us from considering it as a factor and therefore examining how it integrates itself freely, spontaneously, but never automatically, into a whole which we call the cultural situation. A situation implies a point of view, a perspective and an orientation, but what perspective are we to adopt if the point of view is taken away from us by one of the elements of that situation, if it compels us to take up a position within the situation which we should like to examine from outside, objectively?

Now, this freedom escapes us only insofar as we do not take part in it and, in particular, when we try to preserve ourselves from it in order to view it objectively. To allow for this unknown element which integrates itself spontaneously into the cultural equation, we are obliged to assume it, thus behaving illogically, which is the only possible attitude in this case. In the first three parts of this work, we have left this disturbing factor on one side and undertaken a rational examination, while being aware of the limits of a scientific approach and of an objective metalanguage. We were able to leave experience out of consideration, for the language situation only picks it up and carries it, returning it to an instance external to language. Now, on the contrary, we cannot leave experience out of consideration in a cultural situation, anymore than we can leave the container or the content of experience out of consideration: everything is related to experience.

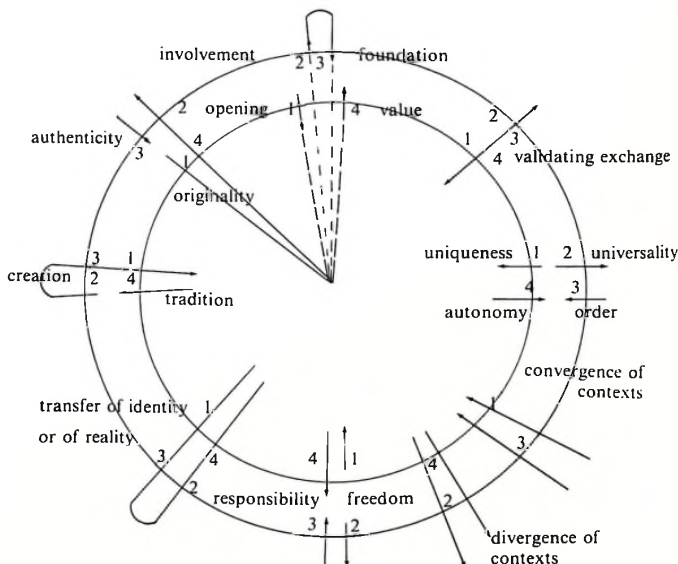
If this is so, the theory of culture has no other choice but to assume itself the freedom inherent in experience, so as to understand how experience manages to integrate itself into its context. The theory of culture must open and involve itself of its own accord, acting in short in the same way as experience and basing itself, like experience, on the exchange of contexts, on the substitution of language situations and on textual interpretation, otherwise it too is valueless. In other words, the theory of culture is constituted little by little, like a hypothesis, which starts by being vague, but is corrected and clearly formulated insofar as it is applied to increasingly varied contexts.

If it gradually discerns the outlines of a fixed structure, it is not that it hopes to see that structure one day related to all cultural phenomena as a whole and in all their variety, but that it could not be constituted and

determined of its own accord, that is to say, freely, without aiming at a confirmation and order of its own, an order implying freedom. This order has its limits: it does not extend to the fundamental originality of experience, but without it the inalienably personal and irreducibly free character of experience would be deprived of any foundation, content and *raison d'être*. Consequently, we believe that the prior freedom of experience inevitably leads to a recognizable structure which we call the cultural situation: we ought to be able to describe this structure, or at least those of its elements which lend themselves to rational examination.

Even if we are compelled to consider our problem as an insoluble equation, even if we have to introduce into our theory the factor of uncertainty which is the free intrusion of experience, we have no right to give way to discouragement. Instead of leaving method and theory at the planning stage, we must put them to the test and assume responsibility for them: they lend themselves to discussion, are confirmed and renewed

Figure 46



(For description of this figure, see below.)

when they meet with contradiction; they are able to cope with the unforeseen, the unknown and the impossible, because they embrace a principle of revisability.

It is the internal organization of culture that is of interest to a theory which professes to be experimental and thus participates in the elaboration of a culture which, like it, is never complete and finds in an order which is never perfect the justification for the liberties it takes. The order which we attribute to the cultural situation does not lay any claim to exact knowledge, but is precise enough to allow us to take new liberties, to orient and direct our research. It is not an order that lends itself to purely objective examination, an order peculiar to culture alone, the specific order of culture and intrinsic to culture (it has not only a cognitive, scientific or philosophical value, and it does not answer the questions "What is a thing?," "What do I know?," or "What is it about?"), an order which implies the haphazard intrusion of experience into the context in which it is put to the test in confusion and doubt, but also with the impetus due to the seeker's faith and patience.

The specific order of the cultural situation is reduced to a series of constants which mark the incidence of experience upon its contexts. We have already described some of these constants: opening and involvement, exchange, substitution, autonomy, and the transfer of identity. To represent them on the model of the cultural situation, we use arrows indicating the origin, direction and destination of these constants as they appear in the cultural situation. This gives us provisionally the following picture: see Figure 46.

PLACING THE CONSTANTS IN A CULTURAL SITUATION

In fig. 46 the constants which have been examined so far are placed in a cultural situation. We will read this figure clockwise, starting at "12 o'clock" with the first four notions derived from the initial chapters: opening, involvement, foundation, and value. To each of these four notions, in order of enumeration, there corresponds a number and, according to the four possible orientations, an arrow. The same correspondence between the number and the arrow is seen throughout: the arrow pointing from the ring which represents experience toward the internal context always has the number 1, the one which also comes from the ring but points toward the external context has the number 2, the one which comes from the external context has the number 3, and the one which comes from the internal context has the number 4.

These conventions having been accepted, the attentive reader will immediately recognize the correlation between the elements and will have no difficulty in methodically fitting what he already knows into the

configuration. He will find the connexions already noted between the various components of a cultural situation when he interprets, for instance, the fact that in fig. 46 arrow number 1 is also to be found at "3 o'clock" ("uniqueness") and at "6 o'clock" ("freedom"), though it remains to be explained why, in the latter case, arrow number 2 appears under the same heading. Certain elements are implied by the diagram itself, for example, the convergence and divergence of the contexts, and the reader may add others of his own accord, for instance the fact that experience is convergent in relation to its internal context (arrow number 1) and divergent in relation to its external context (arrow number 2), which is tantamount to observing that it is at the same time a container and a content. Other elements are not implied by the figure, but result from an application of the remarks already made, for example, the complementarity of freedom and responsibility, of tradition and creation, of originality and authenticity. Little by little, the elements of explanation which are scattered over the preceding chapters will take their places in this simple diagrammatic figure, and by applying the same procedure the reader himself will be able to place them in a cultural situation.

The primordial notion from which all the others are derived, and the only one, by virtue of its simplicity, that is represented by a single line, is situated at "half past one" on the dial of fig. 46: this is the notion of exchange, from which we have derived that of value. It may indeed be conceived of as a mere exchange between the two contexts, but so superficial and simplifying a conception would fail to allow for a decisive factor without which no cultural exchange can take place; namely, experience. It is experience that takes the initiative for the exchange and opens up internally to a context which it seeks in its external context. Unlike the commercial exchange of goods, the price of which can be fixed more or less objectively, cultural exchange depends upon an intervention of experience in a field on which it has no hold until it has internalized it: the result of such an exchange remains unforeseen, and the value of the internalized content can be fixed only through comparison with other contents that have been interiorized already. The single line representing the valorizing exchange is actually broken down into four arrows or four movements, all of which pass through experience; this is why we have given this line the four corresponding numbers, which means that the validating exchange also shares the characteristics which are attributed to each of the four phases resulting from the intervention of experience.

We might interpret this intervention as a way of being in the world, that is to say, the condition of human existence, or, if it be preferred, the means of mediation between the data which escape the control of experience and those which it has already assimilated, which enables experience to transcend itself continually. Perpetually unsatisfied with the

successive contents which it never accepts as being acquired for good and all, experience has the faculty of substituting for them, opposing to them, or comparing with them other newly-acquired contents, in other words, behaving autonomously with respect to its own contents. Without this freedom of action there can indeed be no question of culture in the active sense of the term. We see better, too, why the notion of cultural freedom, represented by arrows 1 and 2 at "six o'clock" on the dial of fig. 46, moves from experience toward the two contexts: experience is not only endowed with freedom of criticism as regards its own contents, but also reserves the possibility of going off in search of new contents of which it knows nothing but the fact that they are situated in an available external context which is infinitely vaster than any momentarily acquired content.

The notions of time and continuity which we find here are inseparable from their graphic representation in fig. 46. We might of course conceive of cultural development differently, and even in opposite and contradictory ways. If, for example, in order to incorporate a new content experience had to make a clean sweep of all its previous contents, the time factor would become superfluous and the whole of culture would build itself up logically, on an abstract, Cartesian basis. In this case, however, experience would no longer have to open up; its content would be fixed once and for all, and the external context would only have to follow suit. We should have to deal with an arbitrary, undemonstrable hypothesis, at once purely rationalistic, deterministic and idealistic. If, on the contrary, in order to incorporate a new content, experience merely added it to the contents already acquired and confined itself to ratifying the results of its searching without taking part in their interpretation, we should have to deal with the cumulative conception of culture which we have discussed at length, a conception at once positivistic, realistic, and materialistic which leads to the double contradiction of an empiricism that destroys the vital functions of experience⁴ and a piling up of facts which would include their own signification. Both these hypotheses have not only the disadvantages of their inner contradiction and their opposition, but also the fault of not accounting for cultural events as they occur really and historically, that is to say with the help of experience involved in a double context and capable of validating it through exchanges.

The first hypothesis refers entirely to a zero point from which culture would be constituted rationally; the second ends in an omega point marking the total assimilation of the external context. In order to arrive

⁴This is the conclusion of an article on British empiricism (*English Studies*, "Zandvoort Number," p. 110), in which the present author, quoting Ayer, shows that radical empiricism implies an *a priori* conception of reality. See also the chapter on logical positivism and analytical philosophy in the same author's work, entitled *Science, Philosophy and Literary Criticism* (Polygraphischer Verlag, Zürich und St. Gallen 1961, pp. 9-22).

at this absolute beginning or this absolute end it is necessary to jump over experience, or in any case to prevent it from experimenting, correcting itself, turning back, interpreting facts, and confronting them with notions; it is necessary to shirk all the operations of culture and to do away with the historical and finite dimensions of its successive contents.

The fact that the contents of cultural experience are in a state of development and consequently finite and definable (as opposed to an infinite, undefined cultural context) does not in any way disprove the hypothesis of a cultural unity, if by "unity" we mean a relationship between the two contexts. Though not purely rational, this relationship nonetheless includes four types of constants, which are represented by numbers in fig. 46. However, we must hasten to add that this relationship is due not only to the nature of the contexts themselves, but also to the factor which is neglected both by radical empiricism and by absolute rationalism, namely experience, which is creative insofar as it never ceases to criticize and validate its contents by confronting them with an external context that transcends it in so far as experience opens up. Thus, cultural unity has the double aspect of an existential order and an objective foundation, and the exchange of contexts does not come about immediately but through the mediation of experience, according as the latter is directed to one or other of the contexts and receives its information from one or other of them. Thus mediated, cultural exchange is broken down into four movements, two of which (1 and 2) belong to an existential order and to historical, experienced reality, while the other two (3 and 4) belong to another type of continuity, which does not depend on the existential hazards of experience, but forms and informs, limits and nourishes it.

If exchange, which is apparently the simplest relationship, can be broken down into four movements, it is not surprising that the other relationships represented in fig. 46 can be analyzed with some accuracy. Thus the series of experience contents which are brought together under the heading "tradition" (at "9 o'clock" on the dial of fig. 46) is naturally opposed to the varied and variable movements which are brought together under the heading "creation," but it is obvious that this simplifying representation does not imply the existence of a tradition that is fixed once and for all, but of a tradition in process of development, complementary and reciprocal in relation to the corresponding creation, an evolving tradition and, in a word, a real tradition. In connection with the following relationship (in the order of the "hours" on the dial) an analogous complementarity may be observed between "authenticity" and "originality," with this difference, that the guarantee of authenticity is given by the context external to experience, while the movement of originality starts from experience (1), creates a new content (4), tests it by

the external context (2) and may receive the guarantee of authenticity in return (3).

Our method of placing elements in a language situation enables us to distinguish the various linguistic levels of a work and to detect the transfers of level whereby a work is connected with a coherent cultural whole. It is clear, however, that a cultural analysis which is applied exclusively to the definite structures of works and texts, critical categories, and historical perspectives omits the movement and freedom of action of which those structures constitute both the substitution and the fixation. In other words, the dynamic and historical character of culture must be the object of another method, that of placing the elements in a cultural situation. It is true that the analysis of levels and transfers is already a cultural action, for it leads to an overall conception, but its object remains by nature linguistic: we must now substitute for it the content of an experience which cannot be fixed, for it appears as a specifically cultural mode of action.

Even though this action, which is both determinative and determinate, is divided into constant phases and thus lends itself to rational examination, we must never overlook the fact that any cultural situation opens up to a context external to experience and that this action is therefore unforeseeable. Unlike the language situation, the cultural situation has no known and recognized object upon which a cultural action is exerted, but it germinates by virtue of an exchange which validates life in so far as it is transitory, ephemeral and precarious. It does not give birth to a permanent substance; it makes itself known by its way of acting rather than by its results (the works of the mind). By analogy, it might be said that the nouns and pronouns of culture are in a language situation, whereas the verbs and adverbs are in a cultural situation.

All the same it is astonishing that the activity which takes charge of the most ephemeral and precarious aspects of human life should at the same time be the activity which gives them coherence, value, and transcendence. It would be impossible to resolve this paradox without having recourse to a double context and consequently to a double orientation of experience, toward the future and the past, toward the unknown and the known. This rupture would seem absurd (and the existentialists have not failed to derive from it a philosophy of the absurd) if man's particular activity, both historical and cultural, had its foundations in itself, in other words if it started from principles that were established once and for all. The study of the successive notions of culture from ancient times down to the present day (on which we insist elsewhere) shows that the Greeks and the Romans, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment and that of positivism had their own notions, which we, in our turn, are calling into question. Moreover, the practice of culture does not seem

always to correspond to the definitions given to it or to the objects assigned to it at a given time. Today, for instance, we are witnessing a new attempt to get rid of an aristocratic conception which was that of the Greeks and to turn it into a universal and specifically human and social activity based on the power of learning, as opposed to the animal instinct. Even the most primitive society would thus have a corresponding culture, but it would remain to be shown that the cultures thus differentiated form a coherent whole. Again, the requirement of unity seems to contradict the dispersion and the unforeseeable variety of cultural facts. What is culture? This question would not arise more insistently than ever had culture not the faculty of renewing itself and putting its acquisitions to the test, if it did not validate the most intimate and private activity so as to give it a universal scope.

At the most advanced stage of our work the same question will arise as though the answers had to be continually revised, as though it were necessary in each case to place the elements in a cultural situation; not that we have an infallible key in our possession, but because we are resigned to the apparent contradiction between the unity of culture and its dispersion, between its individual aspects and its universal scope, between its demands and its whims, between its aspirations and its functions. The only relationship that can resolve the paradox of culture is that which is established between the content and the external context of experience, and this exchange never ceases: we are bound to contemplate it in action and to follow its movements. Thus, the placing of elements in a cultural situation will be a description of movements, changes, actions and reactions forming an ordered whole. Like the great social systems in which individuals, groups and even nations are integrated, like the collective unconscious, the external context of experience cannot be grasped in its entirety or fixed by decree, for it infinitely transcends any experience content, but if it is never completed it is because experience has the power to act upon the limited contents which it continually derives from the external context, keeping them in balance with it.

The external context transcends and escapes experience, but the latter has the power to integrate into it the great cultural systems, from which it elaborates only limited contents. The balance between the two contexts, and consequently the exchange of contents, are obtained at the cost of the constant opening of experience, both to constantly exchanged and validated contents and within the external context. However, experience is not content to take in and exchange new contents (arrows 1 and 3, fig. 46); it also involves and validates them (arrows 2 and 4). Thus it is not by any means a matter of static or entropic balance between two constant elements, but of a balance which is continually called into question by the activity of experience. Simply because experience acts on the contents

which it takes in, exchanges, involves and validates, it modifies the composition of the great systems which are integrated with the external context. In relation to experience, and only in relation to experience, the contents and the containers adopt a constant orientation which is reflected by a state of balance. Paradoxically, it is by continually calling its contents and its contexts into question that experience maintains the balance between them, giving them a continuity which would cease as soon as the creative activity of experience stopped. Thus this activity takes on an inalienable and constant character, which is only confirmed by the risk of involvement.

The activity of experience would not be called "culture" if it left things as they are, and the notion of culture would not be commonly differentiated from that of nature if the cultural contents had not an inalienable character conferred by experience and only by experience. By analogy, living beings assimilate "dead" food, without in the least depriving themselves of their living character, while the highest species of living beings feed on minerals without depriving themselves of their superiority. If it can be said that everything exists in nature, it follows that freedom also exists in nature, and that culture is possible. An experience content differs from a natural datum inasmuch as it takes on a value for experience, which is free to substitute for it another natural datum: *culture is at once what nature contains and what raises nature to a higher order*. One cannot speak of culture as of a natural thing, for it belongs inalienably to man, but one cannot call it artificial either; this would indeed be a serious reproach, for it would mean that culture had withdrawn from the nature containing it and had closed up like a flower that refused to open out and reproduce itself. Unique as experience contents are, they acquire value only by being exchanged, and they cannot do this by themselves: it is experience and only experience that gives them value and transforms the nature of culture.

One cannot speak of culture without at the same time admitting the existence of an authority capable of imposing an order on the environment which constitutes its field of experimentation, not that order is inherent in the environment, but insofar as experience opens up to its environment. The proof that experience contents are ordered in one way or another, and that they are convergent or divergent according as experience enters them or issues from them, is apparent to us whenever we substitute for them a language situation, which brings with it a ready-constituted structure. We adhere to this structure by penetrating into the language situation and can criticize it by leaving the latter and placing ourselves at a certain distance, either within an experience with a different content or by testing it in a different context. However determinate an external context may appear to be, for instance, that of physics, the

intervention of experience constitutes an unforeseeable event and superposes upon the natural order an order derived from creative experience. How should we judge a musical composition that had neither rhythm nor melody and whose sounds or noises were totally devoid of any evocative character or psychic resonance? How should we understand the algebraic and geometrical notion of the limit if we did not perceive both its rationality and its intentionality? For it must be added that this essential order by no means excludes great freedom of interpretation, especially as the experience content may be both personal and impersonal, both subjective and objective, both real and sensory. By reason of the mere fact that the two words exist, the notions of nature and culture are complementary, even in their most unexpected extensions. Nature will always appear strange and wonderful insofar as it gives rise to a culture.⁵

When the elements are put into a cultural situation, it is possible to discern the particular cases of this general complementarity between nature and culture. The validating exchange, which sums up all these particular cases (fig. 46), breaks down into four stages and implies at the same time a natural datum in which experience is involved (arrow 2), by which it is enriched (arrow 3) and which it validates (arrow 4); this would be inconceivable if experience were not endowed with the virtue of opening up to a content (arrow 1) which is not inalienable in itself, but belongs inalienably to experience, the latter remaining in a state of natural symbiosis on condition that it varies its contents and shakes off any artificial fixity. We have already mentioned certain cases of complementarity with two terms: freedom and responsibility (fig. 46, "6 o'clock"), tradition and creation ("9 o'clock"), originality and authenticity ("10 o'clock"). It is of course possible *a fortiori* to conceive of complementarity with four terms, of which fig. 46 gives two examples (at "12 o'clock" and at "3 o'clock"). In any case, however, we insist rather on the inalienable coherence of the facts of culture as a whole than on their differences; this coherence is not logical, rational, affective, internal or external, but cultural, that is to say, general. We can thus distinguish two kinds of *freedom* (fig. 46, "6 o'clock"), for example, freedom of opinion with reference to an experience content (freedom of criticism, arrow 1) and freedom of belief with reference to unknown or unexplored fields, this being directed toward the external context (arrow 2). We may push this distinction even further by pointing out that the first type of freedom is convergent and the second divergent, that the first implies an action on oneself and the second an action on the external context. We may also

⁵In a contribution entitled *Nature et culture* (Alliance culturelle romande, volumes 15 and 16, June 1970, p. 30), the present author makes the following remark: "Since nature remains silent, one cannot enter into a dialogue with nature itself, but only with what it is made to say and with the sense which is given to it."

identify the first type with the word actually used here, namely "freedom," which refers rather to moral or inner freedom, as opposed to "liberty" or "liberties," which refer in particular to civic liberties (situated in a social and political context). To sum up, the first type of freedom, or inner freedom, converges toward self-mastery, whereas the second type, which is divergent and transcendent, leads to self-liberation. Since self-mastery tends toward independence in relation to the external context (arrow 1) and self-liberation tends toward control of the external context, the distinction, and indeed the opposition could not be clearer, yet the complementarity seems to us to be even more obvious. How, indeed, are we to exercise freedom of criticism, for instance by passing judgments of value on a work, without at the same time referring to a belief, that is to say an instrument of control over the external context, a control that is divergent in relation to the experience content, and therefore a belief which may lead to serious divergences of opinion? Is it not indispensable, in fact, to conjugate the criticism of experience contents with the impetus of belief, lest they cancel each other out? Is not culture a matter of conjugation, rather than distinction?

Moreover, freedom is not guaranteed by itself, but by the content it assumes and by the sanction it receives from the context in which it is involved: it has as its correlative or corollary the notion of *responsibility*. A responsibility with a double orientation corresponds to a double impetus of freedom, which brings us a step further toward the general complementarity that results from the intervention of cultural experience and culminates in a symbiosis between nature and culture. Here again we can clearly distinguish two types of responsibility: one limited to a certain experience content or to a series of contents (arrow 4) might be called responsibility to oneself, while the other, coming from the external context (arrow 3), might be called responsibility to others. A fairly convincing example of the first type is the responsibility of an author who puts his name to several works, thus undertaking to answer for what he has written: if his works are not evidence of authentic experience, he will shirk his responsibility sooner or later and, whether he likes it or not, will undermine his readers' confidence. But can the same author remain loyal to himself if he does not constantly test the contents of his works, in other words, if he does not assume a responsibility of the second type, namely to others, and to circumstances which confirm or refute his works and never fail to modify and influence them? Would he be free to guide and correct himself if he were not also free to commit himself? Would he be loyal to himself if he were not at the same time responsible to others?

It might be objected that, to a certain extent at least, freedom and responsibility belong rather to morals than to the theory of culture and that some of their aspects therefore concern other fields, such as law.

However, the most pertinent objection would be that of the uncertainty of the criteria and of the arbitrariness which, after all, prevails in these fields. The relativity of morals is opposed to the moral law of Kant, and nothing seems to be able to overcome this antinomy; Christian morals seem to be just as dependent on a particular society as are Communist morals: other times, other ways. Whatever we may say about this, therefore, seems subject to caution and gives ground for reserves or objections on the part of readers coming from different environments. Who then could take up a point of view sufficiently remote to enable him to avoid being influenced by the situation and the society in which he lives? It will be seen that this objection is of major importance;⁶ it compels us seriously to ask the question whether the placing of elements in a cultural situation offers the least solution, method, or rigor in a field in which confusion reigns. Rigor, method, and solution seem rather to be notions associated with an analytical process; but we have just stressed the relations of complementarity, as opposed to the differences, for a reason put forward from the commencement of this work and with repeatedly declared intentions: if culture is to be considered as a whole, it will appear rather in what unites than in what divides. Even if we clearly distinguish two kinds of freedom and two kinds of responsibility, it is our task to discern not only the relations of complementarity between freedom and responsibility, but also the essential unity of all the variants situated in fig. 46 and summed up by the synthesis of validating exchange. Are we better able to tackle the problem of moral relativity if, instead of analyzing particular morals we place freedom and responsibility in the vastest and most uncertain of contexts by putting them into a cultural situation? More particularly, if freedom is complementary to responsibility, it seems impossible to say anything valid or irrefutable about responsibility which is not called into question by complementary freedom. We cannot see what principle we could refer to, what law we could fall back on, if the cultural situation had precisely the characteristic of opening up to the two contexts, one of which is substituted and transformed (critical freedom), while the other is faced with the involvement of an experience whose opening excludes any principle (asceticism or self-liberation). The only two guarantees offered by the placing of the elements in a cultural situation are those of the exchange of the contents of experience, which validates them reciprocally, and of the foundation *a posteriori* which follows the involvement of experience in the external context; these are not so much general

⁶The problem of moral relativity is dealt with in an original way by Ferdinand Gonseth in an article from which we will quote only one sentence: "Incompleteness also seems to be the condition *sine qua non* for the investment of the moral categories in the various forms of intervention to be made in the course of a genetic process following the multifarious demands of community existence." (*Revue universitaire de science morale*, 12-13, 1970, p. 60).

guarantees as risks, which allow only of case-to-case decisions at the cost of repeated errors: as soon as we make experience intervene, we call everything into question.

The validity of the placing of the elements in a cultural situation cannot be demonstrated by reference to principles accepted by people coming from the same environment or sharing the same beliefs. No one could claim to be culturally free or independent without first giving proof of the fact by experience, a proof which would be neither moral nor legal, but cultural, that is to say general. For instance, a revolutionary who incites others to subversion in the name of freedom abuses the word "freedom" if the regime he intends to set up is authoritarian, and he lies even more irresponsibly if he encourages anarchy with the object of establishing a totalitarian system. Before taking a propagandist or a politician to mean literally what he says, one must place his words and promises in the framework of the acts he performs or fails to perform and, more generally, in their historical context, in which they take on a changing and varied significance according to the interpretations given to the events to which they apply. A party doctrine, like a theological doctrine, may constitute a stable system of reference in which the word "freedom" has a well-defined sense, but no system of reference can exist independently of the referential in which it is actualized, and it is only the test of action that shows whether the word "freedom" is empty, deformed, turned inside out and perfidious, or whether, on the contrary, its use is confirmed by acts. Even confirmation by acts is not enough to eliminate the divergences of interpretation which crop up at every turning-point of history. A system of hermeneutics which is based exclusively on texts, events and acts is bound to accentuate the divergences of interpretation and to widen the rifts. We can see no other solution but that of leaving all preconceived notions of interpretation in suspense so long as the freedom whose significance is being examined has been involved in all the contexts that give it a sense or deprive it of sense. In other words, only the creative activity of experience which opens up, involves itself and finds a foundation can give value to those contexts, and the notion of freedom or responsibility can take on a verifiable, attestable sense only with respect to all the contents and contexts between which experience sets up a flow of exchanges. Thus, critical freedom (arrow 1) must correspond to all the analogous stages: opening, exchange, uniqueness, convergence, self-mastery, creation, and originality—notions which are to be understood in the light of a general correlation of the four stages.

Lastly, we find no definitely fixed notion and therefore nothing in culture that can be regarded as acquired and interpreted once and for all, nothing that excludes a reinvolvement of experience, with all the risks it implies. Even the best documented historical episode would have no cultural interest if the historian's own experience did not call its sense into

question: culture is unending because it is essentially active and can have only what it creates of its own accord. The works of art collected by wealthy men are nothing but a tomb of culture; we may pertinently ask the uneducated man's question: "What is the use of these things?" When it is aware of its ignorance, ingenuousness becomes common sense: personal culture begins, perhaps, with an admission of ignorance, which is the condition for all growth. One cannot place in an open cultural situation the collection of a private individual who, as fancy takes him, piles up objects behind a golden door. An open cultural situation means that there is no cultural past or, if it be preferred, that the culture of the past is not complete, but continues, that is is ever present and open to all. The experience from which it comes must be involved again in a context which continues to go beyond us, if only we try to penetrate it. If culture were an ownable asset, and were entirely knowable, it would have neither value nor freedom and its unity would be that of a deadly boring system. If, despite its transformations, culture nevertheless seems to us to be endowed with unity, it is because it never ceases to give itself a historical, and therefore never complete unity. One cannot fix it objectively, but one can approach it by means of a sort of infinitesimal calculus which corrects itself indefinitely, which itself is never exact, but always in process of becoming exact, which seeks itself as it seeks its object, and tests itself by testing its object. Culture, it is worth repeating, is not found in books, nor is it to be found in the use that is made of books. It cannot exist without libraries or reading, but it becomes real only when it is made a part of experience: it may be said that it is not, but that it becomes and acts. To study it and suggest a theory of it is tantamount to examining the constants of its development, and not the multiplicity of the forms it assumes.

One of the most persistent obstacles in the way of any *petitio principii* is what we have called the divergence of the interpretations of past events and works. The only way of obviating this difficulty that we have suggested is the reinvolvement of new experience in a context extended to the present time, for we cannot repeat the actual experience which inspired events or works. When it is placed in a cultural situation, the *complementarity between tradition and creation* does not appear in the same light as when it is placed in a language situation. The aspects of cultural transmission and literary criticism which we have examined in connection with the language situation tend to place the observer at a certain optimum critical distance and to project divergent interpretations upon a series of works or upon a finite tradition. The optimum critical distance is measured by the consensus of opinion which is stabilized after a period of fluctuations in the critics' opinions. Literary and historical criticism, which actually brings about an analogous *mise en scène*, has the

great advantage of compensating the fragility of interpretations by their convergence and of compensating their subjectivity by the interposition of a critical distance, which raises the series of works or the finite tradition to object status. We have not missed the opportunity of noting that this object quality which metalanguage imposes on language falsifies the real data and marks the limits of literary criticism as the metalanguage of literature: it is of value only insofar as its object really presents itself as an object; in other words, metalanguage cannot take into account the element of creation which belongs to a series of literary works. As it is practised, literary criticism professes to have a certain objectivity and thus deprives itself of the ability to consider the creative aspect of a work, or else it takes the risk of engaging in dubious subjectivity.

The placing of elements in a cultural situation should enable us to overcome the dilemma of metalanguage, for it does not bring about a closed structure, but incorporates components of creative freedom (instead of eliminating and ignoring them). It is true that a tradition like Hellenism must be considered in itself and as an object, as well as in its extensions down to the present time. After the Turks had occupied Byzantium (1453), educated Greeks took refuge in Italy and contributed to the flowering of the Renaissance, but it may be said that, after that last expansion of the Grecian genius, Hellenism became the *apanage* of an élite. But is not a Hellenism for theologians, philosophers, and archaeologists also a tomb of Grecian culture? Besides, can we speak of Grecian culture if we do not mean by it a universal culture? Is not the real practice of Hellenism still alive, or at least subjacent, and does it not involve new experiences in a context which seems unable to sever all its links with antiquity without destroying itself?

In its true sense tradition is related to the present and implies that the past really transmits a content. A tradition that comes to an end can have nothing but archaeological value. To accede to that status of a cultural tradition it must come down to us, that is to say, to an experience which puts it to the test, continues it, and transmits it in its turn. Hellenism is therefore inseparable from a practice of Hellenism, not as it is taught in the schools, but as it integrates and actualizes itself in a contemporary context which does not cut itself off from its sources and roots. A Grecian culture that is not universal, and a Hellenism that is not a practice of Hellenism, are hardly conceivable: one cannot postulate the *existence* of a Grecian culture that is dead and a thing of the past. Grecian culture is living inasmuch as it is simply culture, touches all that is human, and continues because it is not complete. Its very imperfection is the assurance of its development and of its future. To conclude this attempt to place Hellenism in a cultural situation, we must note that the tradition of Hellenism has as its indispensable corollary not only research that seeks

to continue it and give it new life, to rediscover and reappraise it, but also any work of research and creation that unwittingly assumes its heritage.

Cultural *creation* is not the creation *ex nihilo* of St Augustine: it implies not only a present and unexplored external context, but also a development already accomplished and a content already acquired. It is therefore situated quite precisely and results from a historical necessity. If it starts from a content on which new contents have already been superposed, or for which new contents have already been substituted, it is unnecessary for it to go through a development that has already been accomplished. No contemporary astronomer would dream of contesting Copernicus's right to substitute the real motions of the heavenly bodies for their apparent motions as understood by Ptolemy. Is this not also the case with the arts, *mutatis mutandis*? A versifier who uses an outworn language and, in addition, tirelessly repeats an exhausted subject, deserves neither to be called a poet nor to be qualified as a creator, but one who deserves to be regarded as a creative poet makes himself indispensable in a manner which needs to be defined. We are not thinking, indeed, of the historical necessity as it appears in the critical perspective of a language situation, that is to say of a creation which takes place once and results in a text which can be interpreted more or less objectively. We are thinking rather of creation which never ceases to have actuality and is therefore integrated with all new experience. Even if the contexts change, the complementarity between tradition and creation remains constant, and we are entitled to refer to a situation (a term which implies a point of reference) of the components, which are also moving and unforeseeable. When it is placed in a cultural situation, the component creation always has actuality: it may be said, indeed, that the Ptolemaic system is not devoid of interest and actuality as long as it enables us at present to repeat in thought the undeniable experience of the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies.

In conclusion, the placing of elements in a cultural situation demands the actualization of the two complementary phases of tradition and creation. Both of them must be made relevant by a participation of experience, for which there is not, as in a self-contained language situation, an exhausted tradition or a creation abolished by the created object. Both of them belong to the living, present unity of culture, which cannot be interrupted or stopped, delimited or defined, otherwise than arbitrarily. However, the placing of the elements in a cultural situation does not prevent the observer of a tradition or of a creative movement from keeping at a critical distance from them. On the contrary, it implies this, and it is thus founded on a language situation, but it superposes upon it the requirement of experience, and therefore control of the

contents, for which the language situation, oriented toward the transmission of messages, does not provide the means.

If creation does not start from a zero point (*ex nihilo*), but is at once founded on the result of a development at a precise moment, it is because the evolving unity of culture goes through a double movement of return to the sources (tradition) and of experimentation (creation). That which in a tradition may be regarded as already acquired is never acquired once and for all, for if they are to last as elements of culture, the works, and the more or less well-established notions which constitute the concretization of a tradition, must actively and positively support the return to the sources, without which there can be no new experimentation. Similarly, that which in a creative movement may be regarded as new and original is so only for a moment and not absolutely, for if it is to become a historical necessity, creation must have recourse both to the continuity of the tradition in which it is situated and to the involvement of that tradition in a new context. If this were not so, stylistic criteria (romanesque, gothic, renaissance, classical, baroque, romantic, neoclassical, etc.) would not be subject to revision. Tradition and creation are concretized in certain works, ideas, methods, and notions, but the durability of this body of acquired factors inevitably depends on its being transformed into genuine experience, on its being made relevant and put to the test afresh. This means not only that it is oriented in relation to experience and to its centre or focus of interest, but also that it becomes active and turns toward a new and unforeseen external context, so as to be confirmed or refuted, revised and renewed. In the end, the one really acquired factor that is left is the persistence and continuity of experience beyond its contents, which is established by the comparison and exchange of its contents through its phases of opening and involvement, foundation and validation.

The necessity of scientific exchanges and the influences with which comparative literature is concerned illustrate certain functions of this balance and raise a problem other than that of the complementarity between tradition and creation: that of the detection and protection of originality. Here again, we cannot place this notion in a cultural situation without referring to a complementary notion, that of authenticity (fig. 46, "10 o'clock"). When we describe originality as a complex movement of return to the sources (arrow 1), leading by way of a prior validation (arrow 4) to a new involvement (arrow 2), we suppose that all originality lacks an element of cultural balance, which is represented by arrow 3 and denotes a foundation in authenticity. Originality is akin to eccentricity. When a person behaves in a peculiar, individual way, and we say that he is original, we imply that he may have a provocative way of behaving

toward other people, but that he is not necessarily regarded with favor or approval. The praise, or simply the confirmation that are not forthcoming, may be replaced by criticism and rejection, bringing originality down to the level of a vain display of appearances. The criticism of morals has always been sensitive to the emptiness that is concealed behind an eccentric mask, and even the wisest of men may be the object of unfavorable judgments, witness Socrates, who was mocked at by Aristophanes in his *Clouds*. The theater is inevitably the tribunal *par excellence* for all the perversions of originality, for it appeals to the uninformed judgment of the public, which plays, as it were, the part of a foundational context or an instance where laughter takes the place of judgment. The public could not, for instance, deny the originality of the criticisms addressed by Alceste in *Le Misanthrope* to the hypocrisies and injustices of society, but no public will follow him when he decides to withdraw into a desert, for the *raison d'être* of every public is the will or the need to live in a community. The theater and in particular, comedy, can accomplish a cultural work by counterbalancing the perversions of originality by the spontaneous reaction of laughter.

Laughter is not the only guarantee of authenticity, but it has in common with the confirmations derived from the external context the fact that it constitutes the result or the outcome of a test, and therefore corresponds to arrow 3. Literary criticism, and in particular, that which is concerned with detecting the originality of works, is faced with an insoluble problem so long as it does not call upon the complementary notion of authenticity. Indeed, it is not sufficient to prove that an author is the first to deal with a given subject: it is also necessary to make sure that the treatment is adequate. The Italian critic Umberto Eco shows in this connection how certain avant garde movements of the present day, seeking originality at all costs, end up by imitating the means of mass communication ("mass media"). No originality can avoid the test of repeated examination, whose conclusions are never given in advance. It often happens that the discovery of new literary sources merely emphasizes the originality of the author who draws from them and, on the contrary, that a work with no known precedent has nothing of value to offer. The criterion of authenticity, therefore, is not absolute, but complementary, and it must satisfy the other demands of the third phase: foundation, order, convergence, and responsibility.

It remains for us to examine briefly the four separate phases of uniqueness, universality, autonomy and order (fig. 46, "3 o'clock"), which correspond to the four fundamental phases of opening, involvement, foundation, and value (fig. 46, "12 o'clock"). Uniqueness is distinguished from the other corresponding modalities of the same phase, such as

opening and inner freedom, inasmuch as it results from a historical necessity. Experience chooses its contents in such a way that they are not uselessly repeated, and their uniqueness contributes to their value, but it is obvious that a unique content would not be exchangeable if, within its historical context, it did not acquire the value of an example. In its turn, the universality conferred by the involvement of a unique content would offer no guarantee if it did not correspond to a real and authentic order, that is to say, an order whereby the content had been tested. Thus confirmed, the content organizes itself internally and develops a particular autonomy which is independent of its external context. By way of example we might mention the case of a comparatively recent science, namely chemistry. After the first discoveries, which opened up a unique line of research, repeated applications gave them a certain universality and led to the formulation of the laws of chemistry, whose field thus acquired a certain autonomy, continually modified by the evolution of chemistry itself and by that of the related sciences. If we simplify things in an analagous manner, we can fit these four phases into the scheme of integration of a literary work in relation to a tradition. In a first phase, the exceptional qualities of the work (its unique character) are brought to light by a critical process which is rigorous enough to examine the work's intrinsic value independently of its commercial exploitation. There would be nothing exceptional in these qualities had they not a quality of permanence and universality distinguishing them from works which are valid only for a certain time and in terms of a need or demand that is commercialized or at variance with the cultural aims (arrow 2). The universality of a work asserts itself only by degrees, as the work becomes integrated, in comparison with others, in a living, ordered tradition (arrow 3). Within this tradition the work assumes an indispensable function by virtue of its autonomous content (arrow 4); thus, it seems to us, an autonomous voice makes itself heard above the miseries of civil war:

I enslave the mighty, granting as sole rights
The crown to beggars and the poor man's purse to kings.

(Agrippa d'Aubigné: *Les Tragiques*)

Similarly, the experience of regret is identified with some of Du Bellay's poems, and that of passion bears the name of Racine.

In strictly textual criticism, it might be objected that these phases are not observed objectively and that they refer to the history of interpretations rather than to the actual text. To this objection, we will reply that what is artificial and arbitrary is the method of detaching the text from its context and from the experience to which it gives rise, from the traditions

and the indivisible whole in which culture has its foundation. A text is to its history what a language situation is to the cultural situation which includes it. Within the two external contexts (history and experience context), there lies an inalienably human experience, which has the right and the power to act upon a text. What is living and valid in a text is so by virtue of that action. A text transmits either an identity, which is projected upon the objective levels (D) of an expressive language situation, or a reality, which is the object of a descriptive language situation. It is the nature of these two specifically different experience contents that is the subject of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 11

Identities as the Content of Experience

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

An identity expressed within a given language situation, by circular projection of the levels A upon the levels D, remains imprisoned within a closed structure. To release that identity, and at the same time to give it a value of experience, one must place it in a cultural situation. Thus, a cultural situation whose ring is occupied by self-experience corresponds to an expressive language situation. This cultural situation has the double function of substituting contents of self-experience for expressive language situations and of bringing those contents into relation with the corresponding external context. An identity placed in a cultural situation and thus released from the language situation in which it is confined, begins again to live in the actuality of experience, while the objective levels on which it was projected in the language situation lose their actuality, and in time take on an archaic character so long as they express a dead identity. It is therefore necessary, first of all, to distinguish two kinds of identity: identity imprisoned in a language situation (or historical identity), and identity actualized by experience (or living identity), to which these preliminary remarks are devoted.

As a cultural situation is not necessarily the outcome of a series of language situations, a living identity is not necessarily substituted for a dead one, though experience can always effect a subsequent substitution, which is tantamount to saying that experience can at any time compensate a phase of transition by a phase of creation, in the sense defined above. A living identity may then be defined as a content of self-experience, independent of any closed linguistic structures. Thus a living identity no longer depends on the forms of language in which it finds its expression (in literature, on the text), but is situated in relation to a

context which is renewable at will: it is a transmissible identity, for it is assumed by an experience which always has actuality. A dead identity is situated outside time, so to speak (though a dead identity belonging to the past may be qualified as historical), whereas a living identity belongs to the present time, though it was born in the past. These considerations lead us to emphasize the temporality of identity relative to experience.

An identity which constitutes a descriptive language situation, that is to say, a dead or textual identity, is involved in a textual time, that is to say, a fixed or immobilized time, which stops moving with existential time. Many studies of time in the novel show that the reader is caught up in the time of the narrative and that that time is autonomous and distinct from real time. At best, the reader lives with the personages in a time which belongs to them, beginning on the first pages of the novel and stopping definitely on the last page. It is therefore a time which belongs strictly to a particular language situation, a time which is outside any context other than that of the novel, a time with a finite continuity, inasmuch as it has a beginning and an end. This time which stops has the properties derived from a language situation which is self-contained, enclosed by what we have called a magic circle. This circle corresponds to the conjugated requirements of finitude and plenitude, of concrete taste and ideal perfection which are common to all works of art.

In the same way as the textual time in which they are placed, the identities of an expressive language situation remain immobilized and fixed, like heroes whose exploits go on being commemorated, like myths which are invariable in their epic and dramatic forms, or like the feasts of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, which are celebrated year by year. However, as is clearly shown by these examples, it cannot be denied that textual time tends to be perpetuated and that, despite the fixity to which it brings the identities it contains, it calls for a renewal of experience and tends to give exemplary value to the invariable identities which it immobilizes as if they were the figures of an Assyrian fresco. But in calling upon experience it subjects itself to the influence of experience, which never fails to act upon its contents, and in the case envisaged here, tends to destroy the fixity of the textual time and of the captive identities. Because it is essentially and perpetually active, self-experience never contents itself with an ego defined by an identity card or by a record sheet; because it exchanges its contents, it also allows itself to replace the identities it contains, and above all to confront them constantly with the context from which they have come. Thus a living identity, unlike a textual one, cannot be situated outside time: on the contrary, it is the better able to take its place in time as experience guarantees its actuality and puts its presence to the test. A living cultural identity asks to be renewed by involvement, strengthened by confrontation and liberated by

self-mastery; its uniqueness is complementary to its universality, and its discipline guarantees its autonomy: in other words, it has value only as an experience content. Between it and a dead identity, however, there is all the difference that a historian of art has to make between the papers and documents relating to the biography of the painter Renoir and the identity which is revealed *through* the pictures of the same Renoir. A picture takes on a cultural value in our eyes insofar as we recognize in it an experience which we have acquired through looking at other pictures by the same painter; by deepening this experience we are able to identify it, giving it a name, Renoir, but that name is but a poor substitute for a profound experience which we can find no words to explain. It is actualized when we look at a picture, but it covers the entire course of the experience that we have acquired, consciously and unconsciously, through looking at other pictures. We must therefore envisage the work of experience as a temporal progression, and not as a rational or accumulative one. This progression actualizes a content which is limited, but sufficiently charged with tradition and sufficiently involved in new tests to push its roots into the past and to project itself on to the future, in other words, a content which is sufficiently living to participate in the continuity of experience.

Thus, as a content of self-experience, a living identity takes part in the time of the experience, and it is not a picture that we are looking at or a finished work that we are reading, but a Renoir or a Baudelaire, that is to say, an inalienable experience which we identify with Renoir or with Baudelaire. This experience is not inalienable because it is immutable, but on the contrary, because by being actualized it covers a continuity which is that of a temporal flux of the contents, that of an exchange or substitution, which takes place often without our knowing it. If our awareness of time were purely rational, it would place its objects or contents outside time and would stop them like the arrow of Zeno of Elea. The temporal progression of experience is very different: experience is situated continually in the present and covers a series of contents which are sufficiently united to constitute an identity—an identity that is immediately called into question and confronted with other contents which strengthen or weaken it. This living identity is eminently transmissible, inasmuch as it does not remain attached to a single invariable content but is perpetuated in the continuity of exchanges and substitutions, under the aegis of an experience which is intermittent but ever present, concentrated upon a content which is limited but continuous enough to offer a guarantee of authenticity and a proof of identity. By reason of its continuous actuality, the experience of the living identity is limited to the flux of its own content and leaves outside its field the immensity of the context which goes beyond it, but it contains sufficient

continuity to give its content not only a value of identity (of uniqueness), but also universal scope and lasting validity. The incompleteness of experience, and consequently the limitation of its contents, would be shortcomings if the progression of experience were situated in a rational, discontinuous time; in a continuous time, on the contrary, they are advantages, for they compel experience to renew its contents and to remain open, in a state of expectation and readiness for the future. Experience concentrated upon a limited content has the power of breaking free from a single, complete content: it can open up only in a continuous time, which enables it to amalgamate various contents and an identity. No rational analysis can come to the end of this paradox of an identity which constitutes itself insofar as it abolishes its constituent parts: the arrow flies insofar as the parts of its trajectory are abolished. A living identity is therefore indivisible, though certain components can be analyzed, and it is living as long as it submits to the operations of the experience which actualizes it.

Experience itself is not temporal, for its operations do not necessarily succeed one another in chronological order (this may coincide with a methodical order in the case of scientific research), and it cannot turn back at any time and reverse the order of its operations, but must proceed in an order different from the numbering of the arrows (fig. 46), for instance the order of the movement of creation: 2, 3, 1 ("9 o'clock"). Nor is experience itself continuous (though its contents are continuous, provided that they amalgamate in an identity); we have even called it intermittent, although it participates, as a content or external context, in a continuous time. What characterizes it in relation to continuous time is its constant availability, its power of opening up to any new content, and of approaching the identity, without ever entirely reaching it, the identity thus acquiring a certain autonomy as a content, just as the asymptote never reaches the point of identification, and as the infinitesimal calculus tends to approach the curve. Identity can be grasped only in the actuality of experience: it is a content of experience in progress which cannot be either fixed or stopped, for it acquires a certain autonomy (fig. 46, "3 o'clock", arrow 4). This *de facto* continuity is not completely or perfectly analyzable, but it can be analyzed by approximation, by virtue of the availability of experience. The temporal relations between experience and the identities which, imperfectly, it contains, help us to understand why experience, even if it opens up imperfectly (by reason of the autonomy of its contents) to the contents that it actualizes (and thus prevents from stopping), nevertheless opens up sufficiently to grasp their continuity.

The concept of the opening of experience, which we have developed in an earlier chapter, is enriched by the details given by the temporal quality of the contents, by the continuity of the transfers leading to the formation

of identities, and by the relations between the continuous flux of the living identity and the availability of experience, which is apparently disordered and intermittent, or in any case often disorganized, by the autonomy of its own contents. Since experience actualizes the identities which it approaches, an instantaneous content implies the content of an identity in process of formation: it is the awareness of this process of formation which enables experience to understand the identity through its existing contents. Therefore, cultural transfers have a function which is radically different from that of linguistic transfers: instead of referring to a scheme of linguistic structures, they refer to the experience available and consist of actualizing an identity in process of formation, which is tantamount to saying that any identity comes from self-experience. Consequently, even an identity foreign to the person who wishes to get to know it must pass through self-experience, not that that person appropriates it, but because it exists and has a value for that person only insofar as he actualizes and experiences it. If this is so, a living identity belongs to no one, that is to say, as an inalienable possession or content, but to anyone who actualizes and experiences it, respects its autonomy, and transfers its contents to the point of actuality to which its continuity leads. As it is indissolubly related to self-experience, cultural identity has no other reality or proof of its existence but its actuality, which is tantamount to saying that its actuality (its perception by anyone) implies a continuity of real contents.

However, we must beware of the intrusion of the words "reality" and "real" in a chapter dealing with identity as distinct from reality. The reality with which we are concerned here can be only the reality to which self-experience bears witness, even though it may be said that there is no identity without a subjacent, corresponding reality—a unilateral assertion, for the real is not necessarily associated with a cultural identity. To avoid any ambiguity, self-experience cannot have any other content but identities to which it gives a value of actuality coinciding with real contexts, but these do not belong to the field of self-experience. It is clear, however, that the external content of self-experience is not necessarily transformed into identity; in certain cases it may refuse any identity and belong to the other type of experience; namely, that of reality. In relation to reality, identity is not a different essence or substance, nor is it an existential value as distinct from a real datum, but a different kind of content, referring differently to a different type of experience.

Reality does not need to be continued into the experience which it actualizes, and the time of reality does not coincide with that of experience: it has its own time, which does not need to be present, and it is enough for experience to be able to measure it by interposing as a common measure an intermediate time scheme which connects the subject (experience) with the object (reality). Reality has a different way of

integrating itself as an experience content: by reference, and not, as in the case of identity, by participation. Thanks to this participation, identity is cultural in itself, and we have not hesitated to call it living and, precisely, cultural identity. On the other hand, it is not reality itself that has a cultural value, but the complementary operations performed by the experience of reality. Identity is cultural in itself because it participates in the operations of experience and because its time is actualized by self-experience. On the contrary, experience of reality only refers to reality, which has its own time, perceived by means of a schematic measure.

As the experience of reality operates by reference and self-experience operates by participation in identities, it follows that the complementary operations take on a different sense depending on whether they refer to the one or the other. For example, "authenticity" (fig. 46, "10 o'clock", arrow 3) means for self-experience that it is itself authentic, whereas for the experience of reality it is a matter of verifying the authenticity of its content. In general, the names of the complementary operations refer directly to self-experience, for it coincides with its contents, actualizing them and referring to the contents of the experience of reality, whose time does not coincide with that of its contents. For example, "creation" means either a series of operations of self-experience, in the order 2, 3, 1 (fig. 46), which coincide with the development of an identity, or the opening of a new prospect of knowledge, that is of contents in relation to the experience of reality. One might say the same of tradition, which means tradition of experience or tradition of contents according as it concerns self-experience or experience of reality. The opening and the uniqueness (arrow 1) are then those of self-experience or those which the experience of reality obtains from its contents. "Freedom" and "responsibility" seem at first sight to belong rather to the field of self-experience, that is to say, of identity, for one can hardly conceive of referential freedom or responsibility referring to objects which do not imply identity. However, we speak of freedom of research and scientific responsibility: it is indeed a matter of referential freedom and responsibility, for example freedom as regards the object of research (in an external context, arrow 2) and action upon it, experimentation (arrow 1), and responsibility with regard to the notions acquired (arrow 3) and to the scientific tasks to be performed (arrow 4). In relation to cultural identities, "freedom" and "responsibility" mean, on the other hand, self-mastery (arrow 1) and independence with regard to others (arrow 2), actuality of involvement (arrow 3), and the search for identity (arrow 4). In conclusion, we may speak of cultural identities, but there is no cultural reality. In both cases it is the complementary operations of experience that constitute culture, but in one case experience refers to the reality it understands through various intermediaries (perception, instruments, measurement, diagrams, language), while in the other it becomes its own content in actualizing it.

THE DOGMA OF BINARY RELATIONS

It is not always easy to maintain the distinction which we have made between identities imprisoned in a language situation and identities actualized by experience. A language situation of the normative-transfer type, that of law, cannot leave room for the slightest doubt as to the identities which it recognizes; we will use it as a starting-point for distinguishing a few types of textual identity. A person's civil status, profession and nationality are so many identities governed by laws which, in fact, are not concerned with identities, but with natural persons and bodies corporate. In certain cases an identity card is sufficient for defining the identity of a natural person; even if it is false, it refers to the whole body of standards through which the natural person is integrated into the society which adheres to them. It may therefore be said that the individual, as a natural person, is integrated into a society defined by laws, or that a natural person's identity is determined by laws to which the society adheres. However, the laws do not embrace the whole identity of an individual, who may adhere to language situations other than that of law, for instance, through his religious beliefs or through his adhering to an ideology: he is then defined by a profession of faith, by adherence to dogmas or to a doctrine. The sociologists find a correspondence between the mythology of primitive peoples and the structure of their society. All this seems to corroborate the dominant opinion that the individual can be identified only in relation to the social structures which determine the part he has to play. When generalized and raised to the rank of a theory, that of the sociology of culture, this opinion leads to the dogma of the absolute dependence of culture in relation to social structures.

What is true of textual identities is not necessarily true of cultural identities. In order to assimilate the two types, it is necessary to do away with the differences between language situations and cultural situations, and to this end the capital factor, namely experience, must be neglected. We then obtain binary relations: individual/society, cell/ideology, natural person/body corporate, parishioner/parish, etc. These binary relations may be integrated into a language situation, but they do not take into account the active and subjective modalities of binary integration, and they uniformly establish a reciprocal dependence between individuals and structures of integration, as if the individual identity were exactly and entirely defined by the groups into which it is integrated. If the fashionable term "social structures" covered a scientific certainty, and if the imperative "Man, know thyself" could finally pass into the affirmative, we should then be faced with something other than an unverifiable hypothesis or a dogma. In the present state of knowledge—and precisely because knowledge never remains at a standstill—we must leave the question open and consequently make allowance for unknown or unforeseeable factors which do not enter into the calculation of binary relations. These factors

seem to us to correspond to the operations of experience which we have described. In coming between the experience content and the external context, they belong to an open cultural situation with three components. Among these operations, those of creation, autonomy and freedom show to what extent cultural identities are subject to factors of indetermination. We even concluded the previous chapter by declaring that cultural identities are unreal, as it were, inasmuch as they do not come within the field of experience of reality, and that self-experience becomes its own content in actualizing it, which means, in particular, that cultural identities cannot be regarded as data lending themselves to objective examination.

We can see better the respect in which the scheme of binary relations should not be applied to the relations between cultural identities and their social context: cultural identities do not cover social identities. Two individuals exercising the same profession, of the same religious denomination and the same nationality, do not share the same identity, and even if they take care to comply with the social standards and to think in the same way as everyone else, they exclude themselves from cultural identity for that very reason, participating only in a binary relation which stifles any uniqueness, any autonomy, any creative impulse, any opening—in a word, any identity. It has too often been repeated that culture has in it something aristocratic: it is conformism that is not democratic. There is not necessarily any opposition between social identity and cultural identity, but there is tension when society exerts pressure upon the individual with the object of reducing him to a standard identity. A society of individuals who are in perfect conformity with the same standards can be nothing but a society of slaves or dead souls. To become aware of one's identity means, first of all, actualizing by individual experience the identity without which neither the individual nor society can exist. Culture, in its entirety and unity, thus appears to be incompatible with a scheme of binary relations between culture and society, and a sociology of culture can hardly be concerned with the factors which help to create the cultural identity of individuals: this identity is not a thing to be taken for granted, like social identity, and it always has surprises in store. If it did not create itself autonomously, society would have a perfectly explicable mechanism and the politicians would then be quite right in relegating cultural considerations to the lowest rank.

If there is a necessary reciprocity between a society and the culture which is supposed to correspond to it, it follows that the intransmissible peculiarities of that society make its culture equally peculiar, but is an intransmissible culture a culture at all? The simplest and most universal cultural movement is, no doubt, exchange (fig. 46, "2 o'clock"), the only means of giving value to the contexts, and there can be no exchange

without an agent to effect it, namely experience, in the case which concerns us here. But social structures, so long as they correspond to the definition of a structure as an autonomous whole with its own power of self-regulation, have no need of an outside agent, and they are transmitted in the same way as biological genes: they transmit only their own structure, they are mutually exclusive and are not transmitted reciprocally; consequently, the cultures born of these societies live, as it were, in solitary confinement, intransmissible, without any exchanges and without value. Such appear to be the characteristics of primitive societies, but is it right to speak of culture in connexion with them and is it then possible to write anything about a kind of culture which is not transmitted and of which we know nothing because we have no experience of it? Is there really any culture that is incapable of actualizing itself, and if so, how should we know it? All these questions raised by the sociology of culture warn us of the danger of inventing false identities and describing as culture all that comes under the heading of customs and manners. Culture, precisely, is not a structure that is perpetuated by repetition and whose mechanical operation can be examined in its binary relation with autogenous social structures. Culture differs from manners and customs inasmuch as it never repeats itself (in which it moves away step by step from any correspondence with society) and has the unique power—perhaps the highest of human powers—of actualizing itself constantly. Its unity is not that of a self-contained structure, but that of a subjacent whole, as it were, imaginary and always awaiting a new awareness that gives it a new present and finite content. It exists and can be examined only in action, that is to say, in the awareness that gives it actuality—not a momentary actuality that is soon past, but an ever-present actuality. A culture which ceases to exist is a contradiction in terms, and a series of objects which have been dug up from the ground is not a culture; speaking of Toltec culture consists in referring to the results of archaeological excavations which enable us to reconstitute certain elements of Toltec life, but the works of Toltec art which seem to us to have real artistic value are accepted as part of universal culture by virtue of our present experience of them, which the dogma of binary relations forbids us.

THEORY OF CULTURE, ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

As the word "culture" has taken on very different senses in the course of time, we will try to delimit its specific field and, in particular, to confront it with that of the sciences, which, since the last century, have used the word "culture" most insistently and have even tried to make it a scientific concept.

The scientific use of the word "culture" meets with stubborn resistance in French circles—witness its treatment in the great encyclopedias, which usually refer to "Sociology," "Anthropology" or "Civilization" for the scientific use of the word. We have already pointed out, indeed, that the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique Quillet* mentions under "Culture" only the classic sense of "care devoted to the things of the mind." It is the same with the *Grand Larousse* (1960), the *Dictionnaire universel Larousse* (1869) and the *Nouveau Larousse universel* (1948), despite the quality and the quantity of the works in French in the fields of sociology and anthropology. This resistance may lead to two hypotheses, the first of which would consist of supposing that the French language maintains the etymological and classic sense of "cultura animi," the more so as it is in this sense that the word has passed into English and German. The second hypothesis would consist of supposing that the French language maintains an active sense of the word "culture" and avoids making an object of it, even an object of scientific research, culture being understood as an activity involved in a context which it transforms, and not as a form of behavior which complies with standards implying encouragements and sanctions (witness the use of the term "cultural deviations" in sociology). The French word asserts a solid autonomy which seems to confirm this second hypothesis: we speak of "culture du blé" (the growing of corn) just as we speak of "culture musicale" (musical culture), and the word tends to be applied to a determinate object rather than to be taken in an absolute sense.

We have, however, come across an exception to this resistance on the part of French: *Encyclopaedia universalis*, volume 5, Paris 1969, refers, under the headings "Culture (sociologie de la)," "Culture de masse" and "Culture et civilisation," to studies going back to Tylor's work entitled *Primitive Culture* (1871) and translated five years later under the characteristic title *La civilisation primitive* (Paris 1876). The first of the articles mentioned, signed H. Peretz, defines the sociology of culture as "the study of the social operation of culture in stratified societies." It is a particular aspect of culture that is the object of this study, and it is obvious that the sociology of culture is not the metalanguage of culture as such, but only insofar as it applies to society: one is therefore very strongly tempted to apply to culture the categories and divisions, and even the values and identities of a given society. What sociology calls cultures—for there can no longer be any question of a universal culture—will no longer be anything but the reflection or the incidence of the social categories, divisions, values, and identities upon culture. It is not at all a matter of denying the facts upon which the sociology of culture is based, but of recognizing that they constitute only an aspect of culture, namely its social aspect, which makes it appear discriminatory, the apanage of an

élite, the exclusive property of groups "in a state of conflict" and dependent upon "social stratification". The opposition between the study of culture proper and that of its social aspects appears even more clearly in the following article, signed by E. Morin, on mass culture. The very term seems at once to be a departure from the traditional sense, for it applies neither to an improving or educative activity, nor to recognized or recognizable persons, but to effects and publics: "Studies of the public constitute quasi-studies of the market for the great cinema, broadcasting and television companies. Studies of the effect produced by mass media have the benefit of the interconnected interests of family opinion, the intelligentsia and the public authorities as regards the aptitude of mass media for changing, indeed manipulating, the populations which they reach." As for the last of the three articles, signed J. H. Robinson and borrowed from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1966), it develops above all the thesis according to which "the mind and the reason were not part of man's original equipment, like his arms and legs, his brain and his tongue, but have been acquired slowly and built up laboriously. They are themselves inventions, things 'found'. Like other inventions, they are part and parcel of civilization, not innate in man, but dependent for their perpetuation on education in the broadest sense of the term." To "man's purely animal heritage" is opposed civilization, "a legacy which may either be lost or be preserved and increased." If innovation is the attribute of civilization, it is opposed not only to the natural patrimony, but also to societies, which it tends to arouse from their lethargy: "Only original temperaments in highly favourable conditions call into question what they have been taught." However, J. H. Robinson's article is not sufficiently clear and does not propose a clear enough distinction between culture and civilization to enable us to bring out anything but passages and schemes which, as a matter of fact, seem to cover or confirm certain aspects of our theory.

The unquestionable contribution of sociology to the study of the social aspects of cultures is recognized unreservedly outside France, in particular by the following works of reference: *Encyclopedia italiana* (1931, pp. 102-103), *Collier's Encyclopedia* (1966, pp. 553-557), and *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* (1970, pp. 733-739). Thus, the problem of the delimitation of fields between the theory of culture, anthropology and sociology does not seem to be raised by the inevitable overlapping of these fields of study, but rather by the difficulty of arriving at a generally accepted definition and a consistent use of the word "culture." It seems to us, too, that this difficulty in defining a word which, after all, is in common use, would be considerably reduced if it could be associated with the confusion of social and cultural identities.

The completest examination of the definitions suggested in the course

of the last hundred years is that of A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn.¹ It stresses the ethnographical, anthropological, sociological, and psycho-sociological sense of the word, but it also shows that this particular attention corresponds to the center of gravity of contemporary preoccupations. It is comprehensible that this examination starts from Tylor's definition (1871), which we reproduce in its original terms: "Culture, or civilization . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and many other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." This definition shares the following common features with those belonging to the same tradition:

1. Culture and civilization are taken as synonyms.
2. Culture is regarded as a whole whose contents are enumerated.
3. Creative activity is eliminated from the definitions in favor of the social heritage.

It might be added that these definitions make culture an abstraction or an abstract concept which covers concrete contents of a historical, normative, genetic, or psychological nature. As a whole, the scientific tradition of the last hundred years tends to reduce culture to its components and to apply to it the methods of various disciplines, so that the only overall conception that seems to spring from all these efforts is that of some scientific object partaking of various orders of reality (chiefly of social reality): it is all as if these definitions excluded science itself from the cultural sphere (scientific activity going beyond both the biological datum and the social acquisition which they set up against each other) and refused to see in culture anything but a resultant of the social components, which leads them to eliminate at once any hypothesis of an autonomy peculiar to the cultural sphere, and above all, of a cultural identity independent of the social identities.

The obvious limitations of such an overall conception are vaguely admitted by the authors of this examination in the following comment: "The principal drawbacks to this conception of culture are that it implies too great stability and too passive a role on the part of man" (p. 49). By dint of insisting on the "real" aspect of culture, by dint of making it an object and ultimately a datum of the same order as the social datum, the authors of these definitions come to the point of depriving culture of the experience which makes it living: "No socialized human being views his experience freshly" (p. 170). Without contesting the sociological value of the categorical statement which we have just quoted, we cannot help remarking that it is a case of experience based on what has been acquired,

¹*Culture. A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952 (Peabody Museum. Vol. XLVII, No. 1).

an experience which denies any individual cultural identity, and therefore a type of experience which is sterile and static, obeying an external stimulus and denying the very existence of culture and of the activities that belong to it.

A typical example of this tendency of cultural sociology to eliminate culture itself from its object is offered by the results of certain investigations of primitive peoples, whose taboos, reticences and secrets, in other words, whose obstacles in the way of communication are taken for cultural phenomena. If the identity of a Navajo is inseparable from his short-cut hair, his nail paring, his spitting, and his name, and if that is the cultural identity revealed by anthropology (p. 171), we cannot see how scientific interest as regards these secret identities can save a small tribe from the massacre perpetrated upon it in the name of a civilization which believes that it atones for its crimes by treating it as an interesting object and by isolating it as if it were a laboratory animal. Nor can we see how culture itself can be defined, enlightened or saved by the social practices of primitive peoples; one needs a singular determination to lose sight even of the appearances in order to assimilate it to what makes communication and universality impossible.

The authors of the examination quoted, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, realize that it is necessary to consider culture as an autonomous whole: "This is one of the many reasons why culture must be regarded as an autonomous system or category and indeed—at least for certain purposes—can be treated quite frankly in relative abstraction from both personalities and societies" (p. 186). Nevertheless, the conclusion of Kroeber and Kluckhohn is that a general idea of culture does not emerge from the definitions which they examine and that an overall conception does not necessarily result from the study of particular phenomena: "Perhaps a better way of putting the problem would be to say that as yet we have no full theory of culture. We have a fairly well-delineated concept, and it is impossible to enumerate conceptual elements embraced within the master concept. But a concept, even an important one, does not constitute a theory" (p. 181). Disciplines like anthropology and cultural sociology inevitably tend to identify culture with its ethical and social manifestations. A theory of culture which makes allowance, above all, for the specificity of culture, cannot spring from the divergences of interest among different disciplines, and it demands an interdisciplinary metalanguage devoted to culture as such, in its variety as in its unity, in its wealth as in its rarity, an experience carried by language and containing what belongs to it exclusively, what no discipline can appropriate: living identities which have no existence outside the culture in relation to which they are situated, and the notions of reality which, because they never reach a final stage, are evidence of a constant, effective effort.

The same might be said of the only work known to us that is described in its title as a "theory of culture".² Its author, Malinowski, resolutely adopts the point of view of a certain type of anthropology which he himself calls functionalistic. By culture he means human behavior in the broadest sense of the term: "Culture, as the widest context of human behavior, is as important to the psychologist as to the social student, to the historian as to the linguist" (p. 5). The primordial function of this behavior is to satisfy the biological needs or "basic needs" (nutrition, defecation, reproduction); in their turn, these needs are only the conditions of the culture whereby man builds up a new environment for himself; ultimately this environment creates new "derivative" and secondary needs: "This environment, which is neither more nor less than culture itself, has to be permanently reproduced, maintained, and managed. This creates what might be described in the most general sense of the term as a new standard of living, which depends on the cultural level of the community, on the environment, and on the efficiency of the group. A cultural standard of living, however, means that new needs appear and new imperatives or determinants are imposed on human behavior" (p. 37).

The deterministic intention of this theory appears in the passage just quoted: the secondary needs and the behavior which results from them are determined by the structure of the institutions, just as the biological or basic needs from which they are "derived" depend upon the natural environment. Four types of institutions correspond to the cultural necessities: economy, social control, education and political organization. This deterministic tendency is strengthened by the formulation of a general system of axioms of functionalism whose essential feature is that it reduces cultural behavior to habits governed by discoverable laws: "In the same way in which the physicist observes the movements of bodies, reactions of substances, or changes in the electromagnetic field, and registers the typical recurrent behavior of matter, force, and energy; so too the field-worker has to deal with recurrent situations and activities, and to register their canons or patterns" (p. 152). Malinowski's theory, which professes to be scientific, seems in the passage quoted to be based on a nineteenth-century notion of science and its object. Nonetheless it contains many pertinent remarks, and it cannot be denied that cultural behavior—no matter what sense we attribute to the term—is based to a certain extent on inherited habits, canons and structures.

Our study of culture begins where Malinowski's stops: it is the strictly cultural and specifically human forms of behavior, needs, and structures

²*A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, by Bronislaw Malinowski, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1944, 228pp.

that interest us. In our view, culture cannot be reduced to the satisfaction of animal needs, and human behavior does not conform to axioms. True, specifically human behavior must be associated with animal needs, but this is not the point: if culture is a whole and belongs only to man, it also demands to be considered for its own sake, and not exclusively from the anthropological, sociological, ethnological, political or economic point of view, even though it does offer all these aspects as well.

Our main reason for rejecting Malinowski's theory of culture lies elsewhere. Cultural reality as he conceives it does not differ essentially from our own idea of it, but he envisages no other identity but social or institutional identity, and this—in a deterministic perspective—implies a reduction of cultural behavior to functions or roles, and more particularly to the ritual functions and roles of the members of a tribe. Malinowsky's theory eliminates any identification procedure, for identity is given in advance by the social context and can only be assumed necessarily or by force; it implies the impossibility of being. Now, cultural needs do not seem to us to be secondary or derivative. To create one's own identity and to discover reality are basic needs, belonging to man alone; the evolution of the arts and sciences does not prove that they necessarily go hand in hand with the satisfaction of biological needs or with social behavior.

We are doubtful of the laws and axioms of cultural behavior, not only because they have not yet been discovered, but also because they ignore the most undeniably cultural and most specifically human factor, the factor which introduces an element of unforeseeability into cultural behavior, the experience which makes man what he is and makes what he discovers reality. Man would not exist if he did not create his own identity. An anthill may be compared to a social organization, but in the animal world there is no evidence comparable to the identity expressed by a poem or to the scientific search for reality. Cultural identity is not a social role assumed by the individual: it is what he makes of himself and what he creates for others.

Vague and abstract as the preceding arguments may appear, they nonetheless throw light on the obstacle which stands irreducibly in the way of any mechanistic conception of culture: a century's serious research has not brought one step forward the study of what, in culture, escapes any system and defies all laws. A mechanism implies an assembly and a motor, but can it be proved that culture integrates itself into a whole known as "society" and that the forces acting upon that whole also act upon culture? Yet this is what Sorokin asserts: "To sum up, the chief centers of the creative power of great cultural systems are usually societies which have a sufficiently rich heritage, an urgent need of creating such systems with a view to satisfying a vital need, and which happen to be

situated in areas where several currents of culture meet."³ A biological need does not necessarily have to be experienced in order to be regarded as a fact, but does a cultural requirement appear necessarily and exclusively in the form of determinate, observable facts? Is it not also inner and subjective? In any case, the author quoted envisages only the external aspect of the process of cultural migration (or movement of collective creative centers), and to explain this he invents a need of which it is not known whether it is experienced as such or whether it serves as a motor for driving the machine.

Why, in the name of science, must one reduce "cultural phenomena" to natural phenomena and find laws for them at all costs? Is there a single method, and is it known in advance that research will lead to qualifiable results? We do not think so, though certain theorists of cultural change⁴ assert it dogmatically. One may wonder whether the notion of the "clan" and the functionalistic theory really belong to the sphere of culture.⁵ In French, the confusion can still be avoided by the use of the word "civilisation," which seems to have in its own right what the German "Kultur" tends to annex. It is this word that is used by Paul Valéry when he writes: "We, civilizations, know now that we are mortal."⁶ The most impatiently "scientific" methods have a predilection for dead civilizations or the most primitive tribes: any sentiments or ideas that they may have had can either be ignored or reduced to natural needs, customs and, if possible, objects. Nothing in this field is verifiable, save that certain traces have been left by the peoples that have disappeared. When applied to extinct civilizations, the hypothesis of automatic behavior is evidence of automatic behavior, rather than readiness to discover reality. One can understand the past only by making it live again in oneself. To make an object of it is at once to start by killing it. But nothing prevents us from supposing that the past has been experienced and, as it were, is still living,

³ Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Comment la civilisation se transforme*, Librairie Marcel Rivière, Paris 1964, 248 pp. (trans. from English by Pauline Rollet). Passage in italics, p. 152.

⁴ In the following quotation, it is not very clear whether it is the investigator who determines cultural laws, or whether these laws are inherent in "culture": "Multilinear evolution is essentially a methodology based on the assumption that significant regularities in cultural change occur, and it is concerned with the determination of cultural laws" (Julian H. Steward, *Theory of Culture Change*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1955, p. 18). In this theory, with all its jargon, determinism, evolution and causality are brandished like weapons. Here, as elsewhere, what passes for culture refers preferably to objects used by "primitives," as in the following enumeration: "Culture: Probably domesticated wheat, barley, peas, goat, sheep, ox; adobe houses; ceramics (late); mortars; ground stone axes; unbaked clay figurines. Villages on the 'hilly flanks'" (*ibid.*, p. 191). One needs a great deal of theory to arrive at the expression "the cultural repertory of hunting devices" (p. 38).

⁵ We are alluding here to Bronislaw Malinowski, to his theory derived from anthropology and to his notion of "kinship" in *A Scientific Theory of Culture*, University of North Carolina Press, 1944, 228 pp.

⁶ *Variété*, Gallimard, 1924, p. 11.

even though we are scarcely aware of the fact. If this is so, the rule of absolute objectivity does not apply: once again we come up against the irreducible obstacle. Even a civilization in process of disappearing, of which an inventory can be drawn up, lends itself to something more than a cold autopsy, as is demonstrated by André Varagnac⁷ in his study of traditional civilization: "*Tradition was the civilization experienced*: such is the contribution that the folklorists can make to the knowledge which man roughs out by himself. The question remains whether that civilization must not be understood both in its *inactuality* and in its present in order to continue to be fully experienced. Thus the intellectuals ought to discern and teach what traditions could only *express*, since they were founded on experienced, intuitive knowledge, on obscure experience. The great concordances of collective behavior in the course of the centuries and even milleniums, the great convergences of history, the new beginnings, which are unperceived—except by a few specialists—the great fact, in short, that history *has a sense*, such could and should be one of our objects of study, one of the themes of our frequent messages. Art continually gives us another, secretly concordant object of study, for the brush stroke of a modern painter often recalls the perfection of line of the Magdalenian artists. And the same applies to philosophy."⁸ This notion of "experienced civilization" goes far beyond the narrow conception of the reductionists, and we are pleased to note the appearance of the word "experience" in a context and in a sense similar to those which we attribute to it. As for the notion of sense, it implies a continuity in which it is impossible to isolate the past (experienced) from the present (living), the object from the subject. Though this notion is not scientific in the sense in which it is understood by certain writers, it embraces an element of reality which they neglect.

It is not surprising that André Varagnac, in setting up "traditional civilization" against "learned culture," recognizes the limits of an exclusively scientific conception: "Science alone can no longer take over cultural tasks. It has need of other assistance which acts upon sensibility in a far more powerful and durable manner. For civilization as a whole urgently needs to become again for men even more than a love: a passion."⁹ Reductionism is an extreme; the following quotation betrays another: "the criterion of the definitive value of a work of art, a scientific discovery or a social institution is ultimately of a religious, Christian order."¹⁰ It is more difficult to discern Michel Foucault's intentions in the following quotation: "what *D'Alembert's Dream* says about the develop-

⁷ *Civilisation traditionnelle et Genres de Vie*, Albin Michel, Paris 1948.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

¹⁰ Jean Laloup and Jean Nélis, *Culture et Civilisation*, Casterman, Paris 1955, pp. 178-79.

ment of species may reflect some of the concepts or some of the scientific hypotheses of the time; it may even anticipate a future truth; it does not belong to the scientific field of natural history but, on the other hand, it belongs to its archaeological area. . . .¹¹ However, even if a new archaeology may claim to study a work, is it not still permissible to consider it also as a work of art? Is not knowledge part of a living whole which we call culture?

CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION

The foregoing digression shows what is at once original and necessary in the notion of specifically cultural identity. It is original insofar as it enables us to distinguish genuinely cultural experience from any other form of social behavior, and it is necessary insofar as it alone explains the development of the cultural heritage which is added or opposed to biological heredity. It is important, however, that we should not, in our turn, fall into the error of making this identity an object or a real datum and of forgetting that the transformations by which it manifests itself are the result of many conjugated experiences which make it unforeseeable: it eludes any purely scientific and rational examination in the same way as the results of an empirical investigation, which are not contained beforehand in the research program. Our intention, therefore, is not so much to define cultural identity as to describe the processes of identification within an open cultural situation with three terms: self-experience, its identity content, and the external context of identity in which it involves its content.

The notion of reality seems to be much less original, and we do not claim originality in introducing it as a content of cultural experience; nevertheless, it is important to note that in this context it takes on a particular significance. Indeed, it becomes neither an absolute notion (reality in itself or in an absolute sense) nor a notion conditioned by the historical and social context of a given period, but a content subjected to experimentation. What interests us, therefore, is not the notion of reality as envisaged by the sociology of culture, but the present, living notion of reality, the constantly renewed and tested content as it is called into question and actualized by experience. Cultural reality is neither pure reality nor reality as envisaged at a given time, but continuous reality which, in revealing itself, covers both an absolute notion and a tradition of successive contents. It is an open reality because it can be changed, incomplete because it is superposed upon subjacent contents, and cultural because it is transformed by experience. It is important to add that it differs through its opening, its living continuity and its actuality, from

¹¹ *L'Archéologie du Savoir*, Gallimard, Paris 1969, p. 239.

reality as we have placed it in a language situation, in which it remains imprisoned by a fixed structure serving as a vehicle for an experience content.

From the point of view of a cultural situation, the living being is opposed to reality insofar as he is the result of an identification of the person with the successive contents of his self-experience, while experience of the real springs from an opening to data which are extraneous to the person. Cultural identity is then no more a notion based on data than cultural reality is an intangible datum.

Everyone is what he makes of his experience contents, and reality is what comes within his experience. Everyone acquires identity, provided that he tests and actualizes his education through authentic self-experience. Identity comes from a coincidence, in actuality, between the contents of education and the experience which tests them. When confronted with an alienating context, everyone tests in it the content of his experience, or rather the finite and successive contents which he is able to organize, widen, or, on the contrary, fix, change or reject, being called upon to lay hold of a minimum content at least and running the risk—which is sometimes convenient—of no longer existing, of losing all identity, of falling back upon a content of experiences other than his own. The worst solution seems to be the line of least resistance: letting others have experience, letting its contents die, letting others make it their own and identify themselves with what one is not, taking over the experience of others and adhering to a ready-made doctrine, emptying oneself, no longer containing anything that has been genuinely experienced, no longer being different from others, being like everyone else, conforming to a dead, established system, and worse still, imposing it upon others. Life is worth living only insofar as it perpetuates only such contents as are genuinely experienced and can be communicated because they are really endowed with actuality.

The mass culture which we have already mentioned is based on commercial exchange values and on the law of supply and demand—which, as a matter of fact, cannot be verified; the identities it refers to are artificial, for they are neither human nor real; the heroism and virtue of which it boasts will cultivate nobody: they are a mere bone thrown to a dog, claptrap for selling cheap rubbish. As a matter of fact, the "villains" in films and detective stories would often be truer and more authentic if hackneyed phrases did not deprive them of all our sympathy. It is not enough to identify oneself with a hero representing certain social values in order to acquire culture, for it may happen that this ideal will not stand up to any real involvement. Mass culture diverts and alienates, turns pilots into gods and invents Don Quixotes of paper mache, gives brilliance to neurotic stars, and makes no end of false identities. As

against this joyless, witless carnival, genuine identity is what we really assume, what enables us to escape from an enslaving social context. A cultivated person is endowed with a generous content of living tradition which sets him free. A context which is imposed never lends itself to identification: it is by calling it into question and interpreting it that experience acquires a content, as if all the past had to be perpetually called to order and brought to life. The only people that are loyal to their origins are those who call their education into question and reject all that is dead in the past.

An identity is not constituted once and for all, but is born of constant exchange and assumes a progressive value. "Tell me who are your friends, and I will tell you who you are": cultural identity is radically different from social identity insofar as it does not refer to a single person, but to the identification of a person with those who share his experience. Love and identity are inseparable inasmuch as they indicate the meeting of self-experience with a non-alienating content: a person or a work in which he is recognized. A person's social function no more constitutes his identity than the effect and the success or failure of a work; consequently, sociology tells us no more about human values than a structural analysis reveals the identity imprisoned in a text. The personages in a play or a novel or the states of mind reflected in a musical composition are contents which must be restored to their authentic experience; the experience which has created or suggested them (that of the author or composer) and that which tests them (that of the spectator, reader or listener). There can be no valid criticism without a meeting between these two experiences, without a love that identifies them. In any case, the personages and their feelings are mere pretexts: it is experience that gives value to what they represent and exchanges them for what they really are.

What has just been said does not imply at all that the area of identity is limited to a narrow, individual experience, for the exchange of contents precisely prevents it from confining itself to a fixed content. The continuity of exchanges allows experience to validate them. There can be no real identity with oneself, but with a continuity of contents, so that self-experience does not imply a fixed datum, a social or anthropological identity, but an identification of experience with its content, a coincidence and an active love. Social identity is devoid of any cultural content and has its place in a system of binary relations. It is made up of conventions, customs and habits by which the individual is integrated into society. But nothing prevents the individual from going beyond his social context by playing an active part in the transformation of society. He will not do this by revolting against the established order or by withdrawing within himself, but by calling into question the traditions he discovers, which implies a relation with three terms: experience, its content and its context.

Certain categories of progressives and libertarians identify the liberation of man with the manifestation of their personality, their demands, or their beliefs: their work is as vain and dangerous as the satisfaction of the wealthy and the powerful, and it leads only to injustice.

If we suppose that society constitutes an established but revocable system, and that it is enough to substitute a more adequate system for it in order to improve the condition of man, we are neglecting an unforeseeable factor; namely, man and his experience. If man were entirely situated in relation to a social and economic system, he would be reduced to a calculable function and all political regimes would be totalitarian and repressive. So long as it is not proved that identity is reduced to the social function, it must be supposed that there is all the latitude of individual and collective experience between the individual and his environment. No one can be compelled to admit of his own free will what is admitted by everyone or to like what other people think he ought to like: the only law of experience is that it identifies itself with what it likes and allows itself to be reduced neither to vanity nor to servitude. The structuralists have found it possible to conclude in favor of the death of man, after having reduced cultural activity to the fabrication and maintenance of closed structures: so long as cultural identity is not fixed and determined, so long as it is attached to the continuity of its contents, it triumphs over all that is a denial of man. Even though it does not cover any kind of positive reality, it is sufficient to justify human effort and ensures the efficacy of man's notions of reality.

The phenomenon of identification consists in stripping of his social ego—or in going beyond it—whoever goes through an authentic experience, and therefore the love of others and the "culture of the works of the mind" are its only motivation. Beyond its finite contents, self-experience is linked with the universally human context in which all cultural traditions have their place.

CHAPTER 12

The Cultural Experience of Reality

THE NOTION OF CULTURAL REALITY

It is obvious that the phenomenon of identification which we have just described in broad outline finds its privileged manifestation in artistic culture, and that the remarks so far made concerning cultural reality refer to scientific culture. Here we find once again the distinction between expressive and descriptive forms of culture, and we note a certain parallelism between language situations and cultural situations, which might be explained as follows: expressive language situations belong to self-experience and to the identification it effects with the continuity of its contents, whereas descriptive language situations belong to experience of reality, or more precisely, to the adjustment it effects between its contents (notions of reality) and the contexts in which it involves them. We shall indeed be led to develop this notion of adjustment, the processes and phases of which are described in a general way in the comments on fig. 46.

It is equally obvious that the notion of experience takes on a particular sense when it is applied to scientific fields and that it would be dangerous to make no allowance for this particular sense. Since experience has at once appeared to us as a series of processes rather than an abstract faculty or an entity, the verb "to experiment" brings us closer to the sense implied by the expression "experimental method." Since this has taken so long to emerge, we cannot evade the historical problems which it raises, and we must ask ourselves in the first place why the project of a purely rational science, in conformity both with Platonic idealism and with Aristotelian realism, has had to be abandoned.¹ In ancient science and in modern

¹ The following remark of Ferdinand Gonseth throws light on this historical perspective: "In a word, the transition from the ancients to the moderns in the sphere of scientific knowledge may be characterized by the abandonment of integral (and self-contained) rationalism in favour of an open rationalism, a rationalism modified down to its very foundations by the integration of the experimental component." In *Revue de Suisse*, Geneva, 20th November 1951, 2, p. 55.

positivism and idealism, do we not find once again a system of binary relations by which the real is opposed to the living being, the thing to the idea, reality to fiction, facts to the ideal, the essential to the existential, the object to thought, the datum to the imaginary, etc.? Does not this system give rise to confusion and contradiction everywhere by obstinately neglecting the experience without which these contradictions can never be resolved?

Once science can no longer be conceived of as a work of self-reflection and its development no longer resembles a rational construction established once and for all and independent of the assistance of research and historical circumstances, we must make allowance for an intermediate component between the perpetually evolving notions of reality and the inexhaustible context in which these notions are founded and applied, then come into conflict and are dissolved. In other words, reality can no longer be conceived of as an ontological absolute, an invariable datum whose laws are discovered by reason, and which a uniform and indefinitely extensible descriptive language would perfectly take into account. Reality is no longer what it is or what reason makes of it, but becomes what the notions of reality refer to adequately. Our notions of reality depend on the most advanced state of science, and science consists not only in a work of rational construction, but also in a work of experimentation. An adequate reference to reality implies a series of operations whose result is not always foreseeable because they bring into play an authority of control, judgment and revision. As an intermediate element, experience tests its own contents (notions of reality) and takes upon itself the right to correct, exchange and replace them: it is experience that judges whether they are adequate references or not. We deliberately say "adequate" and not "exact," for exactitude would imply a definitive, unrevocable reference. In order to be adequate, a reference to reality must also satisfy two conditions: it must apply to an external context, and it must avoid contradiction or bear witness to an internal coherence of the experience content.

The adjective "rational" takes on a different sense depending on whether we apply it to a language situation or a cultural situation. We will not refer again to the sense it takes on and to the level it occupies in a language situation; we have just observed that in a cultural situation it refers to the internal coherence of the experience content and thereby differs from the adequate reference to the external context. Experience of reality results from a twofold requirement: the notions of reality must be attuned to one another, and they must be made adequate or applicable.

The time has come for us to ask ourselves what it is that makes cultural reality different from any other kind of reality: the realities of life, physical realities, economic realities, the realities of the realists, reality

according to such and such a philosopher, etc. It is easy to answer this question: it is reality cultivated by experience. Yet this very simple answer calls for further explanation. Unlike experience of identity, which identifies itself directly with its content, experience of reality does not contain reality itself and is therefore unable to identify itself with it. Its content is not existential, like that of self-experience, but notional. It satisfies two requirements, one of them internal and rational, (the requirement of coherence of the content), and the other external and empirical, (adequate reference of the notion of reality to reality). The reality of a cultural situation is thus arrived at by way of work which is at once rational and experimental. It is a datum in the sense that it is situated at the same time outside the experience which receives its contents from it, and inside the experience whose contents are in a state of referential communication with the external context. Since it is not an absolute, invariable datum, cultural reality is no more a definitive and definable entity than is cultural identity; both are situated internally and externally in relation to experience, both are in process of developing and depend on experimental activity, both result from human work and bear the fruits of a culture.

Instead of adopting an extreme attitude by affirming either absolute truth or absolute scepticism, that is to say, in each case knowledge detached from experience, we prefer to state no conclusion as to the nature and the notion of cultural reality: we choose to leave the question and to await the results of experience, of which all that can be said is that they will be provisional. If there were a better choice, there would be no reason to make the effort of gaining knowledge. Whereas a language situation fixes certain types of reality (even placed referentially outside) by relating them to a structure of superposed and ordered levels, cultural experience creates an open situation in which reality is neither an external object nor an absolute datum. A descriptive language situation acquires a historical value insofar as it can be replaced by a more advanced situation, whereas cultural experience, which partakes of a tradition, a continuity and a series of historical situations, has no fixed object and takes on a practical value, an actuality value. In this perspective, reality itself belongs to experience (in a twofold capacity: as the reference of knowledge and as the context of application), and it is at once the object and the subject of scientific culture. In qualifying it as cultural we emphasize the fact that it gives rise to the operations of experience and serves as their reference, and we stress its double role in the cultural situation: the passive role of a datum which eludes definitive knowledge, and the active role of a subjacent referential which guides research and supplies it with results.

If we confine ourselves to envisaging reality as it appears in a given language situation, for instance in a treatise on pure mathematics or

organic chemistry, we place ourselves at a single moment of scientific evolution. The notions of reality contained in such a treatise are called upon to change for a very obvious reason: new experiences will be acquired and new notions of reality will correspond to them, not that reality changes in itself or is changed by experience, but because it plays a variable, unforeseeable part in the cultural situation. No doctrine, whether philosophical or of any other kind, can claim to lay hold of reality, but there is a criterion that enables us to assess the cultural value of a doctrine. It consists in asking two questions about it: is it based on authentic self-experience, in other words on a process of identification, or is it based on experience of reality as implied by scientific evolution? Neither Cartesian rationalism nor British empiricism, neither German idealism nor dialectical materialism, neither positivism nor neopositivism can elude these questions. One might say that existentialism and, to a certain extent phenomenology, are founded on self-experience, but then why not admit a frank identification of experience with its contents and why, here and there, claim to be scientific? Dialectical materialism proudly claims that it is based on experience of reality, but what then is the sense of this doctrinaire interpretation of a reality which is bound to escape it in the end? Science is no more capitalistic than it is communistic, and if people speak of bourgeois science in the name of a fashionable or imposed ideology, it means that they no longer concern themselves either with reality or with identity. Man and the world in which he lives have but one very tenuous link: experience, which opens up to both of them and cultivates both reality and identity.

NOTIONS OF REALITY, THEIR TESTING AND THEIR REFERENCE VALUE

The foregoing remarks suggest that we cannot subscribe integrally and definitively to any doctrine of reality, since our notions of reality depend on the unforeseeable results of experience. The practical aspect of experience, however, does not necessarily exclude a theory of cultural reality, but it subjects it to a rigorous condition: that of remaining open and leaving any received notion in suspense, or calling it into question in the light of new results obtained by scientific practice. We cannot judge the nature of reality as long as the notions which refer to it are subjected to experience, that is to say, as long as they test their efficacy.

The same notion may remain efficacious for a long time, but it cannot long remain the same, for as soon as it acquires the value of a law or an invariable, absolute reference, the reality it refers to is lost sight of. Now, reality is the continuous object of the operations of experience, and therefore our notions of it are subject to constant revision. To fix a

doctrine of reality is tantamount to usurping, in favor of notions of reality, the attributes of reality itself and to abstract them from experience. Notions of reality are necessary instruments of knowledge, but they must never be taken for reality itself. As the object of knowledge, reality partakes of a cultural activity: it goes beyond any particular experience and any series or tradition of contents that give rise to new experience. For this reason we place reality in the external context of experience (fig. 46), reserving the internal context for notions of reality. In this cultural perspective, what experience contains is never reality itself and can have no more than a reference value which is measured according to the efficacy with which the notions apply to various orders of reality.

It is probable that we shall never know what reality is in itself, for in order to know this we just call upon experience, which undeniably contains a subjective, unforeseeable element whose action has its place in cultural history. The latter cannot be reduced to a rigid determinism or to a dialectic that is spiritualistic like Hegel's or materialistic like Marx's, for it does not follow a necessary, foreseeable line of evolution. What is foreseeable is the obtaining of certain results based upon tested notions. The same experiment, for instance that of the water level in intercommunicating vessels, can be repeated indefinitely with the same results so long as the conditions of the experiment remain the same, but the experiment itself is only a stage of knowledge, and the notions to which it leads are moving notions, provisionally fixed for didactic purposes. It appears more and more clearly that evolution of the sciences obeys its own requirements, and that these requirements differ from the biological needs to which Malinowski seeks to reduce them by derivation. By the mere fact that they tend to satisfy specifically cultural requirements, the two fundamental varieties of experience (self-experience and experience of reality) have an evolution which is different from biological evolution. Without the processes of identification with the contents of self-experience, a human identity other than biological, animal and social would be unthinkable, and without the operations of reference to reality, there would be no scientific progress. Biological evolution and scientific progress are two different things, and if we conceive of a notion of history embracing both of them, we must make a sufficiently clear distinction between the conditioning of the natural data and the cultural requirements from which the notions of reality come.

We have not the least intention of opposing culture to nature to the point of making them two antagonistic, mutually exclusive entities. It is rather by subjecting them to the same determinism that one comes to the point of opposing one to the other and making any harmony between nature and culture impossible. There is more than a paradox, there is a contradiction, in condemning science in the name of a doctrine of reality,

but the opposite error is even more serious: it is the error which consists in rejecting reality in the name of a scientific doctrine. These two contradictions are explained by a ready-made and consequently deterministic conception of nature and culture, as if there were no room in nature for either self-experience or for experience of reality, as if the cultural requirements which make man and science what they become were unnatural, artificial, and condemnable because they are not amenable to an ideology or to an absolute, definitive doctrine.

Unlike the contents of self-experience, notions of reality cannot acquire an intrinsic value: they have value only insofar as they lay hold of the reality of the external context of experience and refer to it adequately. Thus the interpretation of their referential value differs fundamentally from the interpretation of an identity value. We have acknowledged that, in an expressive language situation, the text or the work—what Malinowski calls an "artifact," or what the structuralists would call a structure—acquires lasting autonomy by developing a time of its own, whereas the text of a descriptive work has no value of its own, beyond its cognitive function or its value as a historical document (unless, in addition, it displays artistic qualities): it is the transmissible notions that count in the effective knowledge of reality. In a cultural situation, a corresponding distinction is necessary. Identification with the contents of self-experience is possible only if those contents are transmitted by texts of lasting value, whereas an adequate reference to reality is possible only if it detaches itself from the texts which transmit the experience of it. Hence the practical value of scientific experience as distinct from the essentially contemplative and existential value of artistic experience, a practical value which manifests itself not only in the evolution of science, but also in its applications and in its influence on our way of living.

Experience of reality is entirely oriented toward its external context, and its contents have a provisional character. Referring to fig. 46 ("4 o'clock" and "5 o'clock"), we translate this observation by saying that experience of reality has a divergent tendency, whereas self-experience has a convergent tendency, for its contents have a lasting value of their own. To these two actions of convergence and divergence, we must add the transfers of identity and reality ("7 o'clock"). As these have not yet been commented upon (except in our preliminary remarks), they will be explained in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 13

The External Context of Self-Experience

For a real experience to take place, it is indispensable that an experience content be involved in its external context. We have just seen, however, that the identification of self-experience with its contents helps to orient self-experience toward its contents and to give them lasting value. Now, any permanence of the contents seems inseparable from the form which they assume, and we cannot conceive of an identity that is not associated with a certain way of living and expressing oneself, a certain style of life and thought which has already found expression in artistic works, in relation to which that style acquires an identity value. The search for identity seems to be inseparable from the substitution of personal experience for the works which spring from the same search. Despite the permanent character of those works, new experience is constantly necessary and leads to the creation of new works. In this context, of course, it is a case of experience of life, self-experience, and not experience of reality, which implies a different external context. Lasting as they are, artistic works are not only subject to evolution in the matter of interpretation, but also confronted with an external context which gives rise to new works and modifies the perspective of interpretation.

The reading of Dante may be adapted for teaching in class, as is done in Italy, but such teaching is profitable only insofar as it gives birth to personal, and therefore present experience on the part of the pupil. One may carry adaptation further by showing, for instance, a television version of Gottfried Keller's *Kleider machen Leute*, which takes considerable liberties with the text; the question which arises then is the following: is the filmed version a new work adapted from Gottfried Keller, or does it betray both the spirit and the letter of the original? The products of mass culture represent such a proliferation of succedanea that authoritative voices are raised in protest against the destruction of culture. When one

reproduces everything, one is faithful to nothing. Fidelity does not consist in exact reproduction of the form of a work of art, but in actualization of the experience to which it is due. That experience is not fixed once and for all by a text or by an object, but asks to be involved in renewed contexts. However thoroughly one may dust a piece of sculpture in a museum, its duration is not that of the material of which it is made, but that which experience gives to its form; it has value only insofar as one can still identify oneself with its form and love it.

Since self-experience is not synonymous with self-love but, on the contrary, with opening to contents which are constantly renewed, exchanged, compared and substituted, it can develop only in the universal context from which it derives all its contents: that of existential reality as distinct from impersonal reality. The first calls for an involvement of self-experience, the second an involvement of the notions of reality. It would be dangerous to allow oneself to be blinded by the convergent tendency of self-experience. Its contents have lasting value, it is true, and attention must be concentrated on the works by which it expresses itself, but the experience which gives rise to those works must be universal enough to be renewed: it is necessary, therefore, to take into account a factor of involvement, of universality and, consequently of divergence (arrows 2 and 4), without which a work would have neither value nor permanence. The element from which a work of art is irremediably isolated is the background against which it stands out. One can no more explain a work in terms of its time (Taine's race, moment and environment) than give it a definitive interpretation, as if the experience from which it springs could never be renewed. National or patriotic music, like that of Sibelius, Smetana, Albeniz, or Granados, converges to a certain extent toward a background of isolated traditions, but it would be played only in periods and regions in which those traditions are alive or it would be regarded as being only of historical interest if it did not strike a universally human note. De Falla expresses patriotic sentiment and adds to it an exotic touch, but his music is universally human enough to affect anyone that hears it.

In supposing that there is an external context of identity, though without expressing an opinion as to its nature, and in qualifying it provisionally as "existential reality," we are merely noting, for instance, the necessity of taking out and freeing a unique work (detached, as it were, from its background) from its isolation. The commercial law of supply and demand may suffice to explain how, by creating artificial needs and by manipulating the collective psyche, it is possible to make people consume the products of mass culture, but no law, even if it be problematical like the one we have mentioned, assimilates the evaluation of cultural works to a causality or a probability, for the relation between

the work and the reader is not a binary relation, as one might think, but a far more complex relation in which experience, whose results are unforeseeable, comes into play. If they were not unforeseeable, one could swear on a work, a system, or an ideology without the least fear of being mistaken. The theorists of the brown, black or red ideologies take full advantage of this, as if they were unaware of the blindness that they inflict upon their adherents. Those who proclaim that commitment consists in putting an ideology into practice make a serious mistake before they ever appeal to the fanatics. Their ideology needs the fire and the sword because it is false and cannot conceive or tolerate any other confrontation with existence than violence. There is another way, more insidious and more subtle, but complementary to the first, of turning one's back on experience and avoiding confrontation: it consists in intoxicating oneself with words, living in an ivory tower and creating for oneself an esthetic world in which death and nothingness prevail. Unfortunately, it would be all too easy to give examples of over-refined poetry and purely bookish references. People tend too much, at the present time, to rush into battle in the name of an ideology, at the cost of contradicting themselves (Malraux), or withdrawing into a hermetically sealed tomb. The two tendencies cancel each other out and provoke each other mutually; they are vain and fruitless because they fail to involve any real experience content in the context of existential reality.

Adaptation of experience to its contents does not necessarily imply a unilateral convergence equivalent to taking a text literally. If this were so it would mean either that the text has no universal value, or that an absolute, definitive interpretation of it is proposed. The identity sought by self-experience never lies entirely in a series of contents, but results from a transfer which is effected as the confrontation with existential reality proceeds. It is the contact with what goes infinitely beyond it that enables experience to break out of itself and to adjust itself to renewed contents.¹ The uniqueness of works must be compensated for by their diversity (fig. 46, "3 o'clock"), and the convergence of experiences in the interpretation of works must be complementary to present, existential opening. The identity which manifests itself in an experience content or in a series of contents has value only insofar as, in addition to its autonomy and uniqueness, it has a character of universality, without which it could never be tested afresh, or consequently, actualized.

The transfer of identity referred to in our preliminary remarks leads to a twofold experience of delight and self-analysis: on the one hand, the experience transmitted by a series of contents is refreshed, as it were, by a new awareness; on the other hand, this new awareness results from a new

¹The true convergence—object of the last chapter—leads to the central point (absolute identity) of the context.

confrontation with existential reality. Thus, self-experience effects a double transfer of identity. On the one hand, it actualizes the identity manifested by previous contents, an identity which thus frees itself from its social determination and becomes divergent, transmissible and universal; on the other hand, but at the same time, this continuous, actualized identity is projected on to a new screen of existential reality, meets with a new context which severely tests it, and finally draws from that context an image, a form or, at best a new original work in which is expressed an original identity, that is to say, an identity sufficiently universal and transferable to give rise to future testing, to interpretations which actualize it.

The double transfer of identity confirms the hypothesis of the double experience content, and it shows the complementarity between tradition and creation. It shows it more clearly than we have been able to do so far. It enables us to recognize and analyze a double phenomenon of identification: on the one hand, the adaptation of present experience to traditional contents; on the other hand, the adaptation of the original experience to the convergent external context—new and unknown—in which it continues. Self-experience is always moving and always present, which is tantamount to saying that cultural identity, specifically human identity, results from two transfers, one consisting of the interpretation of previous, traditional contents (by substitution: works belonging to the past) and the other tending to interpret an original work. This polarity engenders the movement by which traditional experience (arrow 1) is actualized by transfer of traditional identity, involved in a new context (arrow 2), which tests its authenticity (arrow 3), and is finally transformed by substitution (in the form of a language situation) into a new experience content (arrow 4). This movement may be represented by a section of fig. 46 (see fig. 47).

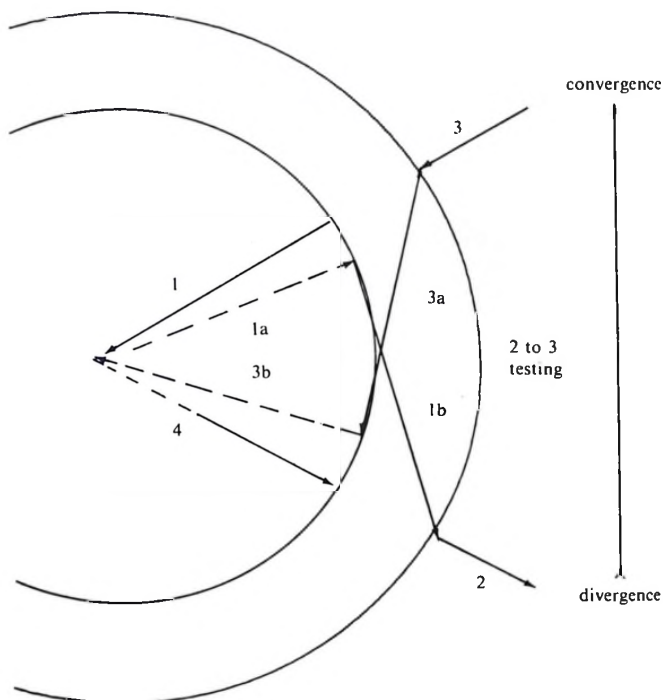
Can this analysis of the double movement of identification be applied to literary creation? To demonstrate that it can, we have chosen a passage in which awareness of this movement is expressed exactly in the order described (1, 2, 3, 4):

Ta fenêtre ne s'ouvre
Sur d'autre beauté
Que tu n'y penches.²

An analysis of this passage shows, in fact, that "fenêtre," which implies an idea of an opening, a frame and content, corresponds to arrow 1, that "s'ouvre" suggests opening toward the outside (the external context) and corresponds to arrow 2, that "beauté" implies the wonder received in

² Raymond Tschumi, *Concert d'ouvertures*, Editions Club du Poème, Bonneville 1967, p. 43.

Figure 47

*Legend:*

- 1 = opening to traditional contents
- 1a = their substitution by present contents (divergent interpretation)
- 1b = transfer of actualized traditional identity
- 2 = involvement of that identity in a new context
- 2 to 3 = testing of involved identity (confrontation and reflexion)
- 3 = confirmation of authentic identity
- 3a = transfer of original identity
- 3b = its substitution by an original content (convergent interpretation)
- 4 = projection of new content on to experience

return for contemplation and corresponds to arrow 3, and finally that "penches" suggests the movement of a person leaning out of the window in order to see something (to make a new experience) and corresponds to arrow 4. Accordingly, we obtain the four fundamental movements in the order described:

- 1 = fenêtre
- 2 = s'ouvre
- 3 = beauté
- 4 = penches

The analysis loses nothing by extending beyond the four fundamental movements. Indeed, "Ta" implies a double identity and a familiarity between the two parts, which corresponds well enough to arrow 1a; "s'" suggests a transfer of identity (the window does not open of its own accord) which corresponds to arrow 1b; "ne... autre... que" implies testing of the identity, which corresponds to arrow 2 to 3; "tu" refers to the original identity after having confirmed it and emphatically suggests (a surprise effect: the reader would rather expect a loss of identity) a transfer of identity through experience and toward the inside, which corresponds to arrow 3a; lastly, "y" implies movement toward a content, movement 3b.

We thus obtain the five complementary movements in numerical order:

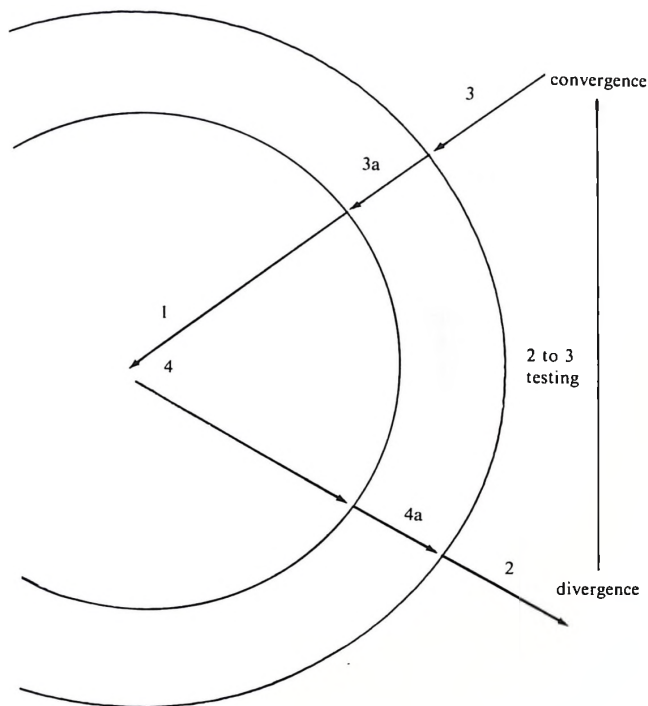
- 1a = Ta
- 1b = s'
- 2 to 3 = ne... autre... que
- 3a = tu
- 3b = y

A comparison between the four fundamental movements and the five complementary movements at once reveals another coincidence, which in all probability is not due to chance: the fundamental movements correspond to the principal words (nouns and verbs), while the complementary ones correspond to adjectives, pronouns, adverbs and conjunctions. As for the slight inversion of the numerical order between 1 and 1a ("fenêtre" and "Ta"), this is only a matter of a linguistic convention which is not observed in all languages. As a whole and in its details, this passage, which sums up a whole collection of poems, offers a perfect illustration of the parallelism between analysis of the movements of identification and their poetic expression.

These movements do not necessarily follow one another in the same order. A glance at fig. 47 shows the possibility of taking a short cut by jumping from arrow 1 to arrow 4 without passing by way of arrows 1a and 3b. In this case, without altering the positions of the principal arrows,

it must be possible to effect the transfers of identity without crossing them, by going directly from arrow 3 to arrow 1 and from arrow 4 to arrow 2, which gives the following scheme:

Figure 48



In fig. 48, the arrangement of the fundamental movements is just the same as in fig. 47; it consists in aligning them according as they are convergent or divergent. If we keep the same alignment and reverse the order of the movements, we can make two simplifications: we can avoid the crossing of the transfers of identity and pass straight from convergence to divergence without recourse to two separate phases of substitution, 1a and 3b. This new diagram of the complete circuit of a cultural

situation, the simplest possible, is obviously useless unless it applies to actual cases. Among the many possible applications, we have chosen the two lines from the *Cimetière marin* which are engraved on Paul Valéry's tomb in Sète:

O récompense après une pensée
Qu'un long regard sur le calme des dieux!

This arbitrarily isolated passage seems to lend itself to an analysis in seven points, corresponding to the seven movements of fig. 48. We will give each of these movements the number which is attributed to it in fig. 48:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 3 = "O récompense" | — A recompense also means a confirmation, a result and a present, a gift from outside. |
| 3a = "après" | — implies a return to oneself. |
| 1 = "une pensée" | — that is to say a reflection. |
| 4 = "un long regard" | — implies the persistence of a speculative attitude. |
| 4a = "sur" | — suggests a new start toward the outside, through experience. |
| 2 = "le calme" | — means the indifference encountered by a mortal identity. |
| 2 | |
| to | |
| 3 = "des dieux" | — emphasizes that it is an alien identity, transcendent yet contemplated, thus also implying an awareness, a test. |

The only word that we have excluded from this summary interpretation is the "qu," which divides the phrase into two parts; now, this division corresponds exactly to the division between the convergent and divergent movements. If this analysis does not seem sufficiently conclusive, an examination of the whole poem reveals a more striking concordance with fig. 48. Each strophe, each image is carried by a doubly contrasted movement: convergence and divergence, content and container. The themes of the sun and the sea belong to the first of these contrasts; those of awareness and death belong to the second. The short cut taken by Valéry in order to eliminate the movements of substitution (1a and 3b, fig. 47) accentuates these contrasts to the point of interpenetration between life, which is "ivre d'absence," and death ("le vrai rongeur," which "vit de vie").

The awareness of an "elsewhere" and the testing of identity in a context external to experience seem to be inseparable from all authentic poetry. From the linguistic point of view (within an expressive language situa-

tion), metaphor effects a transfer of sense (circular movement) and acquires symbolic value by connecting the subjective levels with the objective ones. In a cultural situation, metaphor successfully effects the double transfer of identity, provided that it gives rise to a substitution of genuine self-experience for the symbolic content. To illustrate the transfer of identity towards the external context, we have chosen one of René Guy Cadou's poems,³ which really ought to be quoted in full. We will confine our quotation to a few passages in which this transfer is clearly apparent (the numbers of the movements will be found in the margin):

Je préférerais laisser planer sur moi comme une eau froide le doute d'être un homme	1
Ma vie ne commençait qu'au-delà de moi-même	2
Mais je m'aimais ah! je m'aimais comme on élève Au-dessus de ses yeux un enfant de clarté	2 to 3
Et loin de moi je savais bien me retrouver	3
Ensoleillé dans les cordages d'un poème	4

Isolated from the rich metaphorical substance of the poem, these three passages emphasize the movement of asceticism whereby the poet withdraws from himself and, for a moment, springs out of reach. This kind of asceticism is found in all poetry that bears witness to genuine self-experience, thereby manifesting the identity that man alone creates for himself.

³"J'ai toujours habité," in *Hélène ou le règne végétal*, Seghers, Paris 1952.

CHAPTER 14

Reality as the External Context

Even though we have refused to propose a final definition of reality, we have resolutely situated it in the external context of an experience whose modalities and operations we have attempted to describe. We should be less reticent if a doctrine or theory of science could have any other source but the study of science itself. Science resists the assaults of all doctrines for the good reason that it constitutes itself and is founded on an experience which is peculiar to it. We have said as much of inalienable self-experience, which leads to the creation of an irreducible identity. These two types of experience may claim a specifically human autonomy, independent of biological needs or social structures, insofar as they satisfy two requirements, which we have identified neither with knowledge nor with esthetic enjoyment, but with the intervention of a mediating factor between man and his environment, with the creation of an identity which transcends the individual and the functions of the collectivity, and with the gradual discovery of inexhaustible reality. We insist on the argument, which in our view is irrefutable, that culture, so long as it proceeds from this double requirement, escapes any sociological, anthropological, ethnological, biological, psychological or dialectic determination. We are not in any way attempting to isolate culture from its context: we are opening it to a double context.

Taken separately, experience of reality seems more and more to go its own way. It has taken time to get going, longer than self-experience, which is its elder sister or its mother. As long as knowledge and artistic enjoyment assume social or religious functions and are held fast in the framework of customs and rites, there is no question of experience in course of development and notions of reality taking the place of reality itself. To lay hold of reality and to escape from the isolation in which stationary knowledge is confined, there must be an incessant effort to open to the reality of facts and to break away from social and religious norms. It is doubtful whether man would be capable of such an effort if

from the beginning he had not responded to the urge to reach out beyond his own nature—a cultural requirement. The instrument of knowledge, which man had forged of his own accord, led him in the earliest times to escape from the solitude due to the distinction between subject and object, but for a long time that very language prevented him from isolating reality from his notions of it.

Two universal languages, Greek and Latin, contributed generously to the diffusion and deepening of those notions, but they had no dynamic component and no possibility of calling themselves into question, starting afresh, and renewing themselves. Having attained an unequalled degree of linguistic perfection, they remained prisoners of the languages which had given birth to them and, after a brilliant renaissance, were beginning to decline. It was then that an event of capital importance took place, an event which can be explained only by the reawakening of a cultural requirement. Little by little there were laid the foundations of what we call the experimental method, through which knowledge broke free from the body of received notions, fixed by the universal languages, and at the same time opened to a radically different reality, a reality which was no longer dependent upon language and reason, a reality which was still believed to be reducible to laws, a reality which has proved more and more to be owed to experience alone.

We are far from guessing all the consequences of that event. Nevertheless, we can declare with conviction that the new body of notions which has sprung from that revolution will continue to develop, provided that it does not once again confine itself to its contents. Scientific experience satisfies a requirement which goes far beyond mere curiosity: the need to deepen, revise and define the contents of experience in contact with reality, that is to say, with the facts as they are, in their actuality and in their incidence on tradition. This unconditional attention to the data of experience distinguishes scientific activity from any other and gives it the power of penetrating, step by step, into the field of reality. This field will never belong to it, but it alone has the key to it, it alone has the means of penetrating into the forbidden realm of reality.

Why forbidden? Because no one has the right to make a preconceived idea of it without the obligation of putting that idea to the test. It follows that the speculative and the practical activity (theory and research) are indissolubly linked and support each other mutually, provided that there is no slackening of attention to the data of experience. If theory draws attention to itself, and if research becomes research for its own sake or for nonscientific ends, they destroy themselves and reject each other mutually. This unconditional attention devoted to reality as the external content of experience has led us to remark that experience of reality shows a tendency toward divergence in accentuating movements 2 and 4.

If scientific attention were not turned toward the outside, it would allow itself to be held back by those spells of self-experience whose contents have a duration of their own and ask only to be actualized. On the contrary, experience of reality is condemned to take all its contents as provisional supports, to be corrected, rejected or replaced by others if they turn out to be inadequate. In this it is in fact helped by the very nature of the descriptive language which it invents for itself in each scientific field; by reason of its structure (the descriptive language situation), this language makes all the levels transparent so that it can pass through them toward the object, whereas expressive language connects all the levels by turning them back upon themselves; moreover, the destiny of scientific texts also follows another course, for we tend to see in them only the recipients of the notions they transmit, and to discard them as soon as those notions have been carried a stage further.

The building of a house starts with the foundations: things are quite different in the case of science, which has its real foundations only when it has taken all the risks, and whose results are at once transformed into starting points for a new calling into question. The conception of a unitary science, resting on invariable foundations, proceeding by induction, and passing invincibly from the knowledge of facts to the laws which govern them (Lachelier, *Fondements de l'Induction*, 1896), is outmoded, though some people still proclaim that specific cases belong to the field of science, whereas particular cases, and consequently individual existence, do not concern it. The field into which science has the audacity to penetrate has no limits, and no one has any prerogatives in it or can unwind an Ariadne's thread that will lead him without fail to some way out. The point of arrival can be only a starting point so long as attention is directed forward. Whatever the weight of knowledge and the rational coherence of its contents may be, scientific experience starts off toward its external context in the nakedness of its ignorance. The field which extends before it will always be virgin soil, and the instruments which it brings back from that field will be new. An odd country, where one starts with nothing and comes back with arms and impedimenta!

This nakedness of approach implies certain liberties. Before the reality it seeks to know, experience is free to choose its starting point, its point of attack and its method. Its instruments may be smuggled through, provided that they are not shown anywhere: their existence is kept secret, and they have no identity. Experience makes a project, it foresees roughly what will happen, but expects at any moment to come across the unexpected and to have to change its itinerary on the way. It has to meet with obstacles which block the way and to ignore the dangers by the wayside; it has no right to flee, but it has the right to turn back. If it turns aside from the way, it loses it. Moreover, its way is so uncertain that if it

manages to follow it to the end, it comes back to its starting point, a little better prepared, it is true, for another expedition. Before it starts off again, however, it has to cross the frontier in the opposite direction and declare its arms and baggage; once it is safely back in the warmth of its home, it has to write an account of the expedition, an account which will be full of inexactitudes and will raise more problems than it has solved.

This allegory of research work tends to show that the project by which research anticipates the course to be followed cannot be based on any preconceived notion of what it will find. The study of the problems raised by earlier research helps it to choose the itinerary, but once it is at the starting point it stands before the unknown, where it will make its way only if it has started on the right road and if its anticipation enables it to come back to its starting point. This ineluctable return of confirmed experience (arrow 3) places reality in a context which is always external to experience. If ever experience enters that context, it always makes a fleeting appearance and does not come back empty-handed: it takes in a new content. Problematic as it may be, and even if it lends itself to divergent interpretations, this new content nevertheless includes irrefutable evidence of reality, an incontestable base for the exploration of new areas. The way it has traveled is picketed with guidemarks which enable research to take its bearings, but these guidemarks would be sought in vain on the terrain, that is to say in reality: they are to be found only on maps, in the scientific apparatus from which only projects come forth. If it were permissible to set up the least guidemark on reality itself, reality would be irremediably falsified and the experience contents would lose all their credibility. The paradox of research is that it can take with it only a project with no guarantee (though it is based on other projects which have obtained their guarantees, but nothing more), and that insofar as it takes real risks it increases its chances of making its project viable and of obtaining results, not by occupying the territory, but by returning to its starting-point.

It will be seen how hazardous it is to adopt any position regarding both reality and what is to be expected from research. It is in an asceticism somewhat similar to the transfer of identity that we must seek the highest scientific virtue, an asceticism which consists in renouncing all certainty or, more precisely, in voluntarily abstaining from picketing reality itself. The searcher must take all possible safety measures before he starts, but once he is on his way, he can take nothing away, deposit nothing, leave nothing, and touch nothing; even the rigor of reasoning is no longer involved: he has left it behind, and perhaps he will find it again if he attains his end, which is to return to his starting positions. He is assured of finding it again only if he deviates from any sure route. Knowledge which refuses to venture into the unknown may adorn itself with faultless

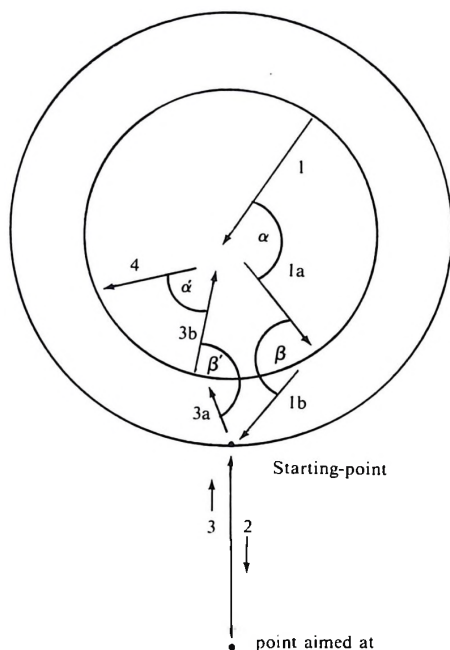
reasoning which gives it an illusion of assurance and rigor: it will soon empty itself of any real content. The only knowledge that can claim to be adequate and rigorous is that which dares to call itself into question: knowledge in process of development or—for it is not so inert as hewn stone—cultural knowledge. The veil it lifts in uncovering reality is that which ignorance calls uncertainty, which does not cover reality, but warms the bed for the vain unconscious passing of time.

The requirement of noncontradiction which has long been imposed on knowledge does not necessarily accompany scientific activity in all its phases, and it may even constitute an obstacle to its progress in the external context, where that activity is characterized by an expectant attitude devoid of all prejudice. Rational rigor is the privilege and the virtue of experience contents, and consequently of descriptive language situations: it is wrong, in any case, to apply those qualities to reality, since experience requires them only of its contents.

The exchange and the progression of descriptive language situations, as we have described them in the corresponding chapters, follow lines which are broken by the impact of new incursions into the field of reality. Through them experience, enriched with these new data, modifies the points of view and the perspective of its contents, redistributes them, and adds new ones which, in this new perspective, must agree with the old ones: rational rigor is constantly reorganized and is never absolute or definitive; thus it is that, for some time, the coexistence of the wave theory and the quantum theory is tolerable. What experience can tolerate on the part of its contents it cannot, however, demand of its contexts, for it must behave toward reality as if it exerted no influence and claimed no right of ownership. To reach the desired point it must go straight to it according to the itinerary, which also provides that, in order to bring back results, it must return to its starting point by the same route. If it strays from that route, however slightly, it loses all its chances of bringing back valid or utilizable results. In all probability, it very seldom happens that it chooses the right route, keeps to it unfailingly, and returns to the desired point. By contrast, the itinerary of self-experience in the external context allows considerable latitude of divergence: it is the movement of testing, 2 to 3. Experience of reality keeps strictly to a two-way route, "out and back," which is characteristic of the movement of exchange (fig. 46, "2 o'clock"). It is scientific exchange, which consists in obtaining new knowledge through unconditional attention to the data of experience, that is, to reality as the external context. We can now go on to make a graphic representation of the operations effected by experience of reality: see Figure 49.

According to fig. 49, scientific problems are raised by the variability of the interpretation and of the orientation of the contents and can be

Figure 49



Legend

- 1 = opening to internal contexts (traditional notions of reality)
- 1a = divergent interpretation
- 1b = research project (choice of the starting point, the point aimed at, and the itinerary)
- 2 = discovery (movement along the itinerary envisaged toward the point aimed at)
- 3 = return toward the starting point, with the results of the research
- 3a = criticism of the project
- 3b = transcription of the results
- 4 = formulation of a new notion

angle α = divergence of interpretation

angle β = orientation of the interpretation in view of the project

angle β' = orientation of the criticism according to the results

angle α' = margin of interpretation of the results transcribed

solved, on the one hand by adjustment of the contents already confirmed at the end of the research, and on the other hand, by comparing the new content with the results of the research. Absolute, final exactitude is excluded: it would mean that the contents are finally aligned and can no longer aim at any end. It is only the mobility of the contents that makes it possible to aim at reality. The opposite happens in the search for identity: the fixity or continuity of the contents permits the short cut of fig. 48, in which the entire divergence is covered in the external context (arrow 2 to 3). In the latter, experience of reality cannot allow itself any deviation, and its course is reduced to an exchange between its attention and the data of reality: it is for the contents to adapt themselves; it does not guarantee their continuity, but gives them an irrefutable reference value, whereas self-experience guarantees the identity of its contents, provided that it calls it into question, loses it, or transfers it into the external context; its contents have a poor reference value or none at all.

A very simple example may serve to explain fig. 49 in a rather more concrete way. Let us suppose that a human skull is discovered in soil that has remained untouched for hundreds of thousands of years and that there arises the question of determining the age of the skull. Several sciences are concerned with this problem, and they have at their disposal advanced techniques, such as that based on the decomposition of carbon 14. It will be necessary to start from the results so far obtained (arrow 1) and, if the skull seems likely to be of a hitherto unsuspected age, to admit that this may in fact be the case (arrow 1a).

From this point, it is necessary to direct the research, giving it a starting point, points of reference and an objective; in a word, the course to be followed must be anticipated (arrow 1b). Once this project has been thought out, it is no longer permissible to depart from it; above all, no screen must be interposed between the observer and the real data aimed at by the research; namely, the skull (arrow 2). In order to obtain results the research must start again from the data it has come across, in the direction of the starting point of the project (arrow 3). If the data confirm and define the project, it is important at this point to adjust them to these results (arrow 3a), which make it possible to transcribe them adequately (arrow 3b). Finally, if it has been possible to determine the age of the skull with sufficient accuracy and certainty, and if it proves to be the oldest skull ever found or different from others of the same age, the perspective of the sciences concerned is modified accordingly (arrow 4). Without making any original contribution to the theory of research, this example shows how experience of reality adjusts its contents and gives them a reference value. It is on this condition that it gathers the fruit of its attention to the data of reality, which it places in its external context.

CHAPTER 15

Convergence of the Two Types of Experience

Experience of everyday reality, especially when custom stales it, is not clearly differentiated from the experience which everyone is constantly led to make: experience of his situation, of his condition, and of the exchanges he has to effect in order to create some sort of balance between the necessities of life (reality) and the demands of his being (identity). There is necessarily an area in which the most widely differentiated forms of experience (self-experience and experience of reality) meet. The question remains whether, in developing in divergent and even opposite directions, the most highly evolved forms of the two types of experience risk breaking forever the bonds without which the unity of culture would be inconceivable.

It cannot be denied that the two types of experience tend to be differentiated, and even to move apart, to oppose each other, and to be mutually exclusive. After all, in order to judge the value of a cultural work, we do not make use of objective criteria, but we refer the work either to experience of reality or to self-experience. Though closely bound up with the work, experience remains capable of detachment and judgment; ultimately it has no reference other than the ego or reality. In the case of self-experience, the criterion boils down to making the experience conveyed by the work coincide with a present experience of the same type, which becomes a receiver, a model and a gauge. Objective as the analysis of the work professes to be, the judgment of its value is based ultimately on this subjective coincidence, that is to say, on the transmissibility and continuity of experience through individuals and not outside them.

In the case of experience of reality, the criterion is apparently simpler, for it is a matter of verifying facts by facts or of confirming experience by its results. However, as the choice of the facts and the results of

experience are preceded and determined by the intentions of research, it cannot be said that experience of reality has its origin and its motives in reality itself, and therefore the criterion of scientific value cannot be reduced to a mere verification of the agreement between the significant and the signified, between the hypotheses and the results, between the interpretations and the data. Especially because it uses analytical processes, experience of reality does not work in any direction without distinction: it needs an orientation, a motivation and prior choices, which are not objective data and which, in certain aspects, belong rather to self-experience.

We note too that self-experience does not find all its criteria in itself and that it has to satisfy certain requirements in the matter of objectivity, that sometimes it even has to submit to verification. We may conclude that there is a certain complementarity between these two forms of experience, though we are not yet able to describe their bonds of interdependence. It is easier, for the time being, to look for the factor which prevents each of them from being self-sufficient. In the first place, self-experience, which aims at inimitable originality, uniqueness and identity, as we have defined them, fails to satisfy an equally imperative requirement, that of agreement with its referential, and tends to elude any criterion of adequation, without which there could be no question of valid identity. Secondly, experience of reality also gives the impression that it is self-sufficient, but for whom does it assume responsibility, for whom does it involve itself, for what person and with what authority does it answer? It has only a neutral, impersonal identity, assumed by anyone. Its pure attention dehumanizes it and tends to make it serve intentions which it does not control. The undeniable virtues which make knowledge possible do not make it possible to determine, direct or guarantee its options, its aims and its uses.¹

Having looked for what differentiates the two types of experience and for what prevents them from acquiring absolute autonomy, we can turn our attention to their common features and, first of all, to the fact—already pointed out—that each is achieved only at the cost of asceticism. Self-experience, indeed, does not seem to us to be capable of attaining any of its ends unless it effects what we have called a transfer of identity, whereby the ego is effaced in favor of identity. It is not a matter of renouncing existence or repressing needs, but of subordinating them, getting outside oneself, educating and cultivating oneself, which implies

¹ This insufficiency of an ethic of awareness is emphasized in a dialogue between Arthur Koestler and Pierre Debray-Ritzen (*Figaro littéraire*, 1 October 1971, p. 55), in which the following sentence of Koestler's is quoted: "This 'ethic of awareness' (as Monod calls it in his last chapter) is nothing of the sort; what answer would it offer to the most burning questions, to the problem of the end and the means?"

an entity that is paradoxical, for it does not exist of itself, but by the way in which it is made up of distinct identities. In the same way experience of reality attains its end at the cost of pure attention which, at the level of a language situation, is reflected in an effort toward objectivity. Nor is it on this side a matter of renouncing all subjective perception or reducing knowledge to mathematically verifiable data, but of opening the real by separating knowledge from its own inventions, an opening which implies self-denial. In both cases, indeed, the term "asceticism," with its connotations of abnegation, reduction, and repression, does not seem exactly appropriate if we insist on the transcendent qualities of the two fundamental forms of experience, each for itself.

In fact, when we look for the common features of the two types of experience, we come up against the obstacle of their divergence and even of their opposition. How can they claim the same virtue if they are oriented in two directions so contrary that one is tempted to postulate two antinomic entities, a spiritual identity, and a material reality? If the two opposite types of experience are not mutually exclusive, it is perhaps because they are compressed into a whole which resolves their antinomy. Thus we come back to our hypothesis of the unity of culture, which is as necessary as it is undemonstrable. In order to verify it, we should be obliged not only to make detailed analyses and confrontations, but also to conclude with an overall demonstration. This seems to us to be impossible, particularly because culture, as a sum, a whole, or an assembly could not be reduced to any of its parts, nor could it be recomposed on the basis of its elements. We have already encountered a similar difficulty in starting from the apparent antinomy between thought and language, that is to say, between two elements which are so familiar that it is impossible to distinguish or isolate them from each other and at the same time to make them analyzable objects by withdrawing and detaching ourselves from them to a sufficient extent.

The fact that it is difficult for linguistic science to define itself and its object without giving rise to quarrels between different schools of thought also shows what obstacles stand in the way of our knowledge of what is most familiar to us. In this connection, we may wonder which is the more familiar: the structures to which language and thought belong, or culture as a whole, which cannot be grasped. It may indeed be said that, at least in its particular forms and manifestations, and above all in its most advanced, loftiest and most difficult achievements, culture is far less a part of any man than language or thought, but this specious argument would be based on the hypothesis of a cumulative culture, a kind of erudition whose whole would be the sum of its parts. If, on the contrary, we put forward the hypothesis of a culture that would include every human action and everything created by man—in which we should not be in

contradiction with the sociology of culture—we might say that language and thought also belong to culture, which is therefore more familiar to us than they are, so familiar, in fact, that we should at once have to give up trying to place ourselves at a distance from it, to isolate it, or to make it the object of a science, for it will always transcend all our possible conceptions of it.

Strictly speaking, language and thought may be integrated in a closed structure, as we have tried to demonstrate, but culture is even less analyzable, and we have not succeeded in discerning in it any structural rules except by assimilating it to an open structure, that is to say, to a structure whose elements are perpetually developing (at once present and timeless) and whose assembly has the indescribable faculty of constituting itself and of calling itself into question.

Language and thought can also extend (towards the levels A1, A11, D1, D11) and ramify (by derivation or by transfers of level) the structure which includes them; in this, they open it out, strengthen it and fix it, even though they imply creative freedom acting through all the fixed forms (written works, for example) of that structure. From our point of view, which consists in opening up a prospect on the basis of two united, contrary experiences, culture does not allow itself to be confined in any fixed structure because its two centers are at once containers and contents, and because their contexts are variable. Language and thought seem to be more familiar, inasmuch as they offer the refuge and security of stable, recognizable structures, but we are bound to admit that culture—if such a whole exists—is situated at once on this side of those structures and beyond them, in other words, that it comprises two contexts, one outside experience and the other within it. Thus it appears—and still from our point of view—to be what is most familiar and at the same time most strange to us.

The multiplicity and diversity of languages and forms of language is covered by common experience, transcended by the possibility of transposing thought from one language or form of language into another. It would, however, be impossible to effect such a transposition if thought had not, in one way or another, the faculty of breaking free from languages or forms of language and of containing them in the form of experience. Experience does not confine itself to substituting and releasing its contents: it takes the risk of opening up itself—and with its contents—to a context which contains it and causes it to call its contents into question. This external context has neither limits nor intrinsic structures, and experience can subsist before it only by exchanging it with its own contents. As these are of two different kinds (self-experience and experience of reality), the external context appears to be invested with two different qualities, a quality of identity and a quality of reality, whose

apparent incompatibility troubles us and whose difference does not seem to correspond to the notion of an external context with no intrinsic structure.

Experience of reality cannot enrich its contents by opening up to a context of identity, and, vice versa, self-experience cannot enrich its contents by opening up to a context of reality. Are the two types of experience condemned to ignore, oppose, and even exclude each other? Insofar as they remain open to their external context, the two types of experience imply no intrinsic difference between reality and identity, there being no reason to distinguish them as the external context. On the other hand, experience contents are markedly differentiated, but only insofar as they belong to one type of experience or the other: it is then an extrinsic difference, not inherent in the contents themselves, but in their quality as contents. There are two different ways of approaching the external context; there is a way of being and a way of knowing, which correspond to the two specifically cultural requirements.

We have seen at what cost and in what rigorous conditions experience of reality ventures into its external context. We have also seen that self-experience attains its end by a transfer of identity, that is to say, by assuming an identity which is not intrinsic to it. The two types of experience are lost, each in its own way, in the external context. They are lost if they do not come together in it and are not able to effect a reciprocal verification or control of the two movements or the two ways. This mutual control is exercised indirectly. There is no question, for example, of influencing scientific experience once it is involved in research, nor does a scientific method suit poetic creation. It is in their origins and in the adjustment of their aims that the two types of experience support each other. A new conception of nature and a new awareness of man's condition inevitably go hand in hand. From this point of view one might examine, for instance, the simultaneity of a certain type of rationalism and classicism. It is to be noted, too, that the scientist and the Port Royal convert are united, despite their conflict, in the person of Pascal. This person does not move us because he solves the conflict dramatically, but because his conflict, which goes beyond Pascal as an individual, is our own conflict, the renascent opposition between a religious and a scientific culture. Pascal questions the regularity of natural laws no more than Calvin does, but he inherits from St. Augustine his belief in a future beyond nature, in a metaphysical nature. However, since he denies any human intervention in the evolution of religious beliefs, Pascal risks leaving it to science to break down this reticence—a role for which science was not prepared, but which it has had to play by reason of the defensive strategy of religion.

It is not only experience of reality that sometimes has to correct and direct its partner. The tyranny of positivism, scientism, "reductionism" and, in general, those doctrines which claim to have a scientific basis, calls forth a host of reactions whereby self-experience asserts its rights more or less consciously: the revolt of youth, the return to mysticism or its substitutes, the revolt against authority, the adoption of an anarchic attitude, the challenging of any rational or authoritarian conception of social life, the assertion of personal rights, etc. We try to explain these reactions, that is to say, to give them a sociological interpretation, but they are explained after the event, and there is no proof that they can be foreseen. Against an invasion of their entire cultural sphere by sociology, against the affirmation that "all cultural phenomena are born, grow up and die,"² there stands the demand to be, the demand for eternity which is attested by archaeology and by all we know and see of man. No science, no technology, no politics and no religion can stifle this demand. We are living on "dead cultural phenomena."

The two types of experience meet in a shady area: culture is not only the arts and the sciences, for experience of reality is daily experience and, being habitual, is not fundamentally distinct from self-experience; they both spring from a universal requirement. Is not the discovery of oneself and of reality the adoption of two rates of walking along the same road? Must one not get out of oneself to discover oneself, and must one not be oneself to discover reality?

It is doubtful whether one can ever make culture a scientific object and therefore know it and assign to it determination or causality, chance, or probability. In order to know it one would have to be able to get away from it. For us there is nothing more intimate, and at the same time there is nothing more universally human. It makes itself, or we make it, without being able to foresee what it will become. It can be reduced neither to objects nor to phenomena. To take it seriously is to take the human condition in hand, to balance what one knows with what one is. In it man finds his identity and discovers reality; he cannot subordinate or plan it, see in it a reflection of reality or make it an instrument of power; it transcends him on every side, and at the same time it is his most intimate possession; it comes from him, and it is also the object of all his efforts. If it is vain to attempt an analysis of culture, it is necessary, *a fortiori*, to beware of any attempts to divide it. Identity no more implies a spiritualistic temperament than reality is based on a positivistic theory. Self-experience needs to open up to reality, just as experience of reality cannot ignore that it is itself included in a human effort. The identity assumed by

²See Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Comment la civilisation se transforme*, Librairie Marcel Rivière, Paris 1964, p. 58 (trans. from the English by Pauline Rollet).

a man is never irrelevant to his knowledge, which is not constituted merely for any man whatever. This interpenetration of the "two cultures" appears problematical because it is impossible to get outside culture, to see it from outside and to observe that all that one does participates in it. At the most, one can say that one participates in it by reaching beyond oneself by an effort of searching and abnegation, which implies an identity infinitely higher than any individual identity and a reality beyond the reach of the knowledge acquired.

The imperfection and the extreme limitation of any individual culture and the unilateral, divergent effort of the two types of experience, necessitate solidarity of effort and a common orientation. How are we to arrive at this without a theory of culture which culture itself will ceaselessly pull apart and reconstitute, which offers a guarantee only insofar as it makes allowance for imponderables and remains on the alert, modifiable and verifiable? One cannot apply a scheme without discovering its fragility: our theory claims to offer a lasting contribution only inasmuch as it draws attention to the unforeseeable exercise of experience, unforeseeable because it creates an identity beyond any identity and explores a reality that goes beyond any calculations. Culture is the meeting place of all the efforts that make man something other than an animal species and give him such a firm grasp of the real that he goes forward without any fear of going beyond his depth, taking every precaution, and knowing that there is danger everywhere.

Before being applicable, a theory of culture must be adequate. Far from applying itself to a particular field or pretending to be a science, it must, above all, open up beyond any limited experience content to the infinite possibilities implied by the incompleteness of all experience. It should also refer to what has never been said or written, painted or sung, that is to say, if it were possible, to culture envisaged as a whole. It is in relation to that virtual and never comprehended whole—for it also includes all future activity—that experience acquires its value, extends beyond itself, and partakes of a unity which ultimately cannot be experienced because it is constantly present and because it is vain to try to escape from it.

Nothing is more familiar and unfathomable than our identity; nothing is stranger and more available than reality. Our ability to create the one and to explore the other is surely man's highest power, a unique and nevertheless universal power, the limit and transgression of the captive eyes in the field which is cultivated with perseverance and jealousy. We do not deny that this double requirement is bound up with our economic, social or political needs or that it depends on social data, but we affirm that it has its own aims.

Culture is at once the center and the periphery. It cannot be isolated, subordinated or conditioned. It is our work, and we are its work, both

inaccessible as a whole and intimate in its individuality. It escapes every individual and every collectivity, yet everyone believes himself to be competent to judge it and despises it more or less, through ignorance or through obedience. If society and culture were one, or if they were ordered harmoniously, would people speak of "anticulture" or "counter-culture",³ and would there be controversies about the two cultures? From the linguistic point of view, neither of the fundamental language situations, the expressive and the descriptive, can alone attain the object of its transcendence which, for the expressive language situation, is to make the subject appear through the object to such a point that the latter becomes totally transparent and, for the descriptive language situation, is to neutralize the subject to such an extent that it no longer needs to be taken into account. The scholar can no more do without transcendence than the ignorant man, and the one is no more a stranger to the same culture than the other. This culture for all, which no elite and no authority may appropriate, is at once familiar and transcendent: familiar in the sense that all take part in it and depend upon it; transcendent inasmuch as it goes beyond every effort and every success.

It is dangerous to assert, as certain sociologists do, that there is a necessary parallelism between culture and society. Against this undemonstrable hypothesis we may cite the fact that societies which do not burn books continue to cultivate the values of extinct societies. As for the conflict between the two cultures, it may be attributed to a morbid state or to a social crisis, but to detect this disease is already to recognize the healthy state of which it is a deviation. Now this healthy state cannot be reduced to a social or political norm, for that norm would allow itself to be contaminated by the disease or to be swept away by the conflict. We see here all that culture—because it is both familiar and transcendent—contains in the form of energy and potentiality, and how far it goes beyond society while penetrating it. The claim of present-day sociologies—capitalistic or communistic—to recognize only objectivity or "realism" is evidence of a morbid disequilibrium, against which young people quite rightly revolt. This official and profitable reductionism feeds on intellectual laziness, political stagnation, and reassuring dogmatism, and it has but one object, if any at all: to escape genuine human responsibility, to despise, enslave, exclude and impoverish culture which goes beyond the established order, to blind people's conscience by setting up a screen of determinism, and finally to escape from itself, from all identity, from all humanity.

It seems to us more and more doubtful to consider culture as an objective datum or to make it a transcendent one. If it were reduced to

³See Theodor Roszak, *Gegenkultur*, Econ Verlag, 1971, 425 pp.

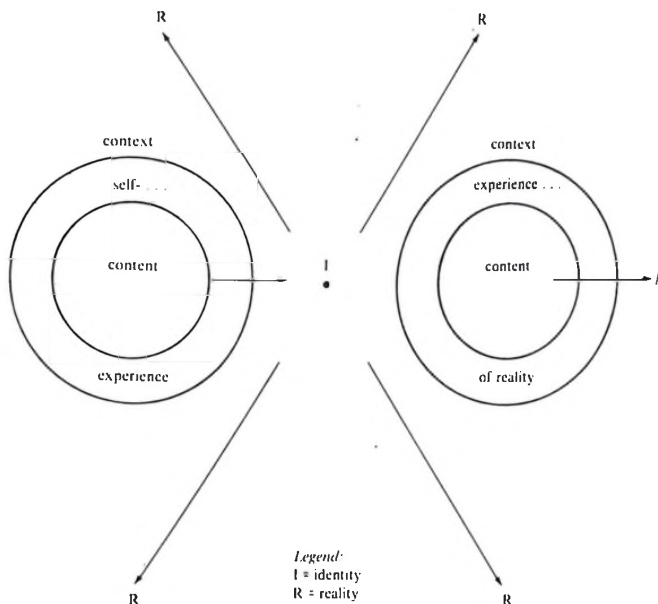
facts, no one could add anything more to it or remove anything from it; if it were situated outside or beyond history, it would be out of reach. Nor do we consider it as perfectly knowable, for if it were, we could place ourselves entirely outside it, make it an object and manipulate it. It is within us and goes beyond us, so that we abase ourselves when we despise it, degrade ourselves when we enslave it and uplift ourselves when we serve it. Through culture, man the creature becomes a creator, but he does not create an inferior being: he cultivates an identity and a knowledge which extend beyond him. One need but think of the unusual power of the imagination, which is capable of making present to the mind things that do not exist or are absent.

The search for the common features of the two types of experience has naturally led us to consider culture as an indivisible whole. It remains for us to describe, within the framework of our theory, the relations between the two types of experience. An obvious first observation is that the more different they are in their contents, the more they tend to conjugate their operations in the external context, which implies a line of meeting in a common context. This meeting, through which they validate each other mutually, may be represented as follows in Figure 50.

In this last figure, the two types of experience are represented on the same axis, whose center is occupied by the point I, in relation to which they are at once in conjunction and in opposition. Self-experience moves toward this point, and experience of reality moves in the opposite direction. According to this figure, identity is to be conceived as a series of operations directed toward this point, whereas reality is situated in the opposite direction and, according to fig. 49, is aimed at by a series of centrifugal operations. Though opposite in relation to the point I, the two types of experience follow the same axis: self-experience aims at its center, while experience of reality aims at the periphery.

This geometrical diagram—the simplest conceivable—takes into account the results we have arrived at. In particular, it represents the fact that, as it were, one has to leave identity behind in order to know reality and to go through reality in the opposite direction in order to recognize identity. This diagram also takes into account the fact that the two types of experience do not have two distinct external contexts, but move in two opposite directions in relation to the center of the same context. This center may be interpreted as a point of interiority toward which self-experience tends, whereas experience of reality, by reason of its centrifugal orientation, always moves outward, that is to say toward reality. Though the two types of experience overlap—as we have supposed in the case of everyday experience—they are situated on the same axis, on the same side of the point I, at a certain distance from it, closer to self-experience, but we cannot conceive of each type on a different axis

Figure 50



without there being a difficulty of orientation, for one type cannot aim at the outside without referring to the center aimed at by the other, and vice versa. Thus, the double situation of opposition and conjunction makes it necessary for both types to converge on the same axis and to orient themselves in relation to each other as they move apart. It is in this sense that the reader should understand the title of this last chapter, "convergence of the two types of experience."

This rule of convergence makes any division of culture quite problematical: the less the two types of experience lose sight of each other while moving apart along the same axis, the less likely they are to lose their common orientation, their opposite destinations and their purity. The slightest deviation on the line of the axis causes a confusion and disequilibrium between the experience contents: it is then no longer possible to know whether the notions of reality actually correspond to reality and whether self-experience does not contain an alienated, decen-

tered, aberrant identity. Self-experience always ought to be aligned, beyond the point I, on the center of the current notions of reality, and experience of reality always ought to secure its rear by orienting its contents according to the direction in which self-experience operates. Increasing differentiation and specialization of the two types of experience are ensured to the extent to which they support each other.

Cases of deviation from the rule of convergence have particularly serious consequences. We will merely quote two examples. The first concerns ideological deviation, which consists in using pseudoscientific methods in analyzing the stratification of society: such methods have the effect of reducing man to a social function and, in the end, ignoring even his identity. A policy based on them can lead only to chaos and war; it results from a misguided experience of reality. The second example refers to the projection, upon reality, of values which are relevant to self-experience: desires, emotions, political convictions, religious beliefs etc. Generally, the result of such projection is not only an obscuring of reality, but also a contagious alienation caused by self-experience which is misguided, decentered and lost in an uncontrollable reality. We cannot sufficiently stress the fact that neither of the two types of experience has its true center inside its contents, and that both identity and reality transcend each of the corresponding types of experience. Identity lies in a deep ego, outside the self in the external context of experience, which is reached with great difficulty through various incessant transfers of identity, whose traces disappear, whose acuity grows blunt, and whose vividness fades. Unlike reality, identity is not an area that lies before one, an area to be explored, but a forgotten or lost person that is made to reappear; it is actualized when an ego, turning outside itself, toward its center, reaches out to assume it; genuine interiority excludes egoism. Similarly, reality does not lie at the center of the notions that represent it, but beyond or at the end of the search for it, and the notions of reality subsist only at the cost of incessant adjustment, but no adjustment would be possible if the search had no valid orientation, that is to say, a reference to the true identity. The two tendencies of experience, toward the center and toward the periphery, divide the context into two complementary aspects which meet, thanks to their opposite orientation, and are distinct from each other by virtue of their convergence!

Despite the rigor of the rules of mutual orientation—or rather because of it—the two types of experience are free to constitute distinct contents insofar as they open up to the corresponding direction of the context, either exactly toward the center or toward the outside, exactly in the centrifugal direction. These two types of opening and distinctness would be inconceivable if the external context did not correspond in all respects to this complementarity of the two types of experience, not that it is

structured in itself or beforehand, but because the two types of opening make it possible to grasp its unity.

In order to reach this last chapter, we have proceeded as in the course of a complicated debate, first voting on points of detail and reserving the general question for the end. The general question is culture which is free to open up to the unity of its context, embracing all that is social and political and also necessarily going beyond the linguistic structures studied in the first three parts of this work. Unlike the needs which hold man in chains, his double cultural urge to reach out beyond himself gives him the power of freely determining both his identity and his situation with regard to reality.

Conclusion

Objective as it professes to be, our theory of culture is based on experience which is necessarily personal. If the context of cultural experience were not inexhaustible, it would be sufficient to reduce culture to an object of the human sciences, a historical object, indefinitely divisible and observable in its differences.

Calling for total understanding which defies analysis, culture can be conceived of in its unity only at the cost of personal involvement. Moreover, it is not necessarily represented by any particular art or genre, and it does not always appear in the form of an observable phenomenon.

Between an experience and the language situation for which it is substituted, or which is substituted for it, there seems to be a relationship similar to that which links language and thought, the one being inconceivable without the other, and each appearing to be obvious and distinct. The first two parts of this work are based on this natural distinction between two inseparables: language and thought; the last two parts deal successively with culture as the container and the content of open experience (the three elements of the cultural situation). The fact that structure and experience are inseparable does not in any way prevent us from conceiving them as distinct and from effecting at any time, often without knowing it, a series of substitutions which restore culture to its original richness and to the underlying unity of its possible forms and operations.

Because scientific experience has effectively penetrated reality for centuries past, it is no longer called into question, but the esthetic and ethical forms of experience, which create their own object, either through contemplation or through action, are now in need of people to defend them. Their content is not made up of knowledge, notions and concepts, and their own reality remains untouchable: "For me," Alberto Giacometti explained, "reality remains just as intact and unknown as it was on the first day that somebody tried to paint it".¹

¹Quoted by James Lord in the journal *L'Oeil*, September-October 1971, p. 23.

If man acted only to satisfy his needs he would have no reason to stand at a distance from himself and from reality, no motive for escaping from his destiny in order to transform it and go beyond it. Art takes liberties with reality, both external and internal; no matter how closely it embraces it, an unacknowledged modesty or, on the contrary, a growing disgust will loosen the grasp. That modesty makes the unreal charm of Botticelli's *Spring*, and that disgust drives Daumier—or the Dürer of *Christ among the Scholars* (1506, Thyssen collection, Lugano)—to caricature.

The growth of objective knowledge and the power that comes from it cannot encroach upon the need for identity which appears through the changes and anathemas of contemporary art, and even through its threats or its inclination for self-destruction, for it is not so much art that is concerned as human identity. A civilization cannot indulge in the illusion of dominating reality without support from outside and without the power of keeping it at a distance. We have called this point of support the center of the cultural situation. The two fundamental types of experience refer to this focus of identity, as though the loss of oneself were connected with some original sin, or then were compensated by some recourse to a transcendent authority.

Summary of THE THEORY OF CULTURE

by Raymond Tschumi

Part One: LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

The subject-object dichotomy and the ability to refer to things absurd in themselves are ascribed to language: thought freely conceives of negation, orders things, and creates identity. The dialectic interplay of language and thought and their contrary claims on communication cause art and science to develop in two increasingly opposite directions: either toward an increased knowledge of and power over the external world, or toward a higher and more creative form of consciousness. This divergence results in two fundamental language situations: a descriptive and an expressive one, the former tending to place objects on a relational level, the latter placing subjects on the same relational level.

Part Two: LANGUAGE, TIME AND FREEDOM

Chapter 3. Diachronic cultural movements are analyzed from three points of view: a) linguistic, b) historical, and c) ethical, thus appearing successively as: a) movements of exchange, b) involved in a continuous cultural duration, and c) freely motivated by the action of thought upon itself and upon its objects.

Chapter 4. Models for the description of the movements of discovery (in science) and creation (in art) are offered. The hypothesis that thought determines and modifies not only the modalities of perception, but also its very object, is formulated, and the concepts of totality, novelty and tradition are examined. As a whole, this study outlines the structure of creative continuity.

Part Three: CONDITIONS FOR A METHODOICAL THEORY OF CULTURE

1. As illustrated by the extreme cases of Ryle and Sartre, the ontological fallacy in the field of epistemology consists in neglecting the linguistic

components of culture. As a cultural work is also, among other things, a linguistic object, it cannot be determined by way of causal relations, unless it totally lacks originality.

2. The hypothesis of the unity of culture entails that each cultural component must be examined from the point of view of its relations to the whole, in other words, must be placed on its "language situation."

3. Dimensions of depth (background and potentiality) must be added to the static and dynamic cultural elements studied so far.

4. As a metalanguage, the theory of culture cannot subject the unpredictable elements of culture to a rational investigation and must respect cultural autonomy.

5. The theory of culture cannot claim to be scientific in the full sense of the term: its degree of objective validity is determined by the fact that it constitutes a metalanguage.

6. Any metalanguage having to account for unpredictable elements runs the risk of arbitrariness. The study of the creative process requires an interpretative as well as imaginative effort. Thus a theory of culture cannot be purely rational: it must be imaginative as well, that is, it ceases to be objectively valid when it fails to account for cultural wholeness in an imaginative way.

7. Background and foreground are involved in a simple relationship:

$$E = f(F, B)$$

8. Other new elements of the theory: the *limit* of objective validity, situated on the D levels, and the *threshold* of creativity, situated on the A levels. Represented by foreground lines or by background planes, these elements designate the fluctuations of cultural continuity inside a work or a tradition.

9. Intersubjective identity of concepts being improbable because of individual backgrounds, cultural communication requires a double element of creativity with varying thresholds and of adequacy with fluctuating limits. Adequacy is reached by the effort of shifting the background to the foreground. Cultural transmission can be defined as a diachronic communication with a permanently adequate background and with thresholds on a continuous line.

Chapter 6 Artistic and Literary Expression

1. The laws of correspondence and compensation between the subjective and objective components apply to the descriptive and expressive language situations.

2. An expressive structure is characterized by two kinds of movement:

a reflexive and centrifugal movement—called the spiral movement—which makes transmission and interpretation possible, and a circular movement of reciprocity between pairs of opposed levels (D–A or B–C) centered on the axis of interdependence between language and thought.

3. In the case of lyrical poetry, these two kinds of movement culminate in formulating themes in the form of images,

4. in the novel in narrative form,

5. and in drama, movies, cartoons, television, etc., in forms of greater variety and lesser intensity, which tend to disintegrate the expressive structure.

6. Culture needs an atemporal or simultaneous critical perspective, in which all works appear as contemporary, or rather, as judged at the same time. The need for one single critical perspective throws light on the instrumental character of historical criticism.

7. Culture may be compared to a building which is often destroyed, sometimes partly renovated, always projected and masked by scaffolding. Again and again its form must be imaginatively conceived, rather than perceived, from an optimum critical distance.

8. Comparative criticism is possible only when assuming that culture is indivisible, debts and originality being inextricably fused together.

9. The fluctuations of criticism are stabilized by means of a consensus of opinion and a convergence into one single perspective.

Chapter 7 Scientific Culture

1. Scientific culture is based on rational activities. Reason is defined as the ability to place objects on a descriptive language situation. This means, in particular, that logic is situated on the level of thought (B level), rational and referential signs on the linguistic level (C), and determined objects on the D levels.

2. The theoretical stages of scientific growth are placed in their language situation.

3. The same method is applied to scientific evolution, which is distinct from growth in that it is based on the principle of self-correction by means of oscillations up and down all levels. Scientific evolution reaches, in the course of its fluctuations, periods of regression when the language of science passes through a phase of exaggeration and stagnation (as in the Middle Ages), or periods of dispersion, when the language of science passes through a phase of understatement, as the present period of specialization and of weak underlying unity testifies.

In sum, the main contribution of science to culture is to be found neither in the precision of the descriptive methods nor in their applica-

tions, but rather in the creative and self-corrective faculties which place science in a perspective of human responsibility.

Chapter 8 Derived Forms of Culture

1. As one single whole, all forms of culture are derived from the expressive and/or the descriptive language situations. The most common means of derivation consists in a transfer of levels followed by the corresponding shift of thresholds and limits. The more ancient forms of expression are considered first.

2. As forms of culture, religion and mysticism are characterized by a merging of the subjective and objective components of their language situation and by an internal language situation.

3. In the same perspective, ontology is characterized by a gradual transfer of levels, invariably skipping over the linguistic level C, as if being had not to be previously referred to.

4. Whatever "scientific history" may mean, history always supposes a responsible authority, and is a mixed form of culture that is both descriptive and expressive.

5. Among the most recent forms of scientific transfer, linguistics and psychology must be mentioned. Linguistics obviously results from a transfer of language (level C) to level D.

6. In the case of psychology, all the upper levels (A and B) are transferred to the D level. Psychoanalysis results from a therapeutic transfer which may be termed "subjective" in that it is obtained with the collaboration of the patient.

7. The therapeutic transfer which characterizes medical practice may be termed "transitive" in that the patient is treated as an object.

8. The language situation of modern pedagogy reveals a heuristic transfer.

9. The language situation of jurisprudence denotes a variety of the normative transfer typical of ethics.

10. As a whole, the social sciences are based on an optional transfer: however scientific they claim to be, they suppose preliminary options. As their language situations contain an arbitrary element at all levels, they must aim at promoting the best mode of social participation.

11. Thus all forms of culture take place in one single diagram of derivation, which confirms the hypothesis of cultural unity.

Conclusion

The method used in the present work lends itself to further applications.

Part Four: EXPERIENCE AND ITS CONTEXTS

Chapter 9 Preliminary Remarks

1. Problem of method: how to conceive of culture in itself, apart from its linguistic aspects?
2. In order to answer this question, one must place culture in its specific perspective.
3. In this perspective, expressive language situations tend to operate a transfer of identity, whereas descriptive language situations tend to the discovery of external reality.
4. Partial and cumulative conceptions of culture must be rejected.
5. Culture is not limited to linguistic phenomena, and consequently overlaps the fields studied in the preceding part.
6. Cultural structures are not closed on themselves and are ordered by an open hierarchy of values.
7. Personal judgments based on experience are not necessarily incompatible with rigorous criteria.

Chapter 10 Substitution of Language by Experience

1. As an open structure, culture is made of five elements: experience (10), its contents (11 and 12) and its external contexts (13 and 14); its unity results from the convergence of both types of experience (15).
2. Experience is understood in a specific sense.
3. Experience contains and exchanges whole language situations.
4. Experience opens itself to various contents.
5. Experience assimilates, exchanges, and evaluates its own contents.
6. Values are modified by new experiences.
7. Two types of experience must be distinguished: of identity and of reality.
8. Each type of experience is opened to its own context, where its new contents originate.
9. Experience is free to test and modify its contents.
10. Testing operations can be analyzed in four fundamental phases: opening, commitment, foundation, and valorization.
11. The movement of exchange resulting from these operations makes it possible to place certain open notions in a "cultural situation": freedom and responsibility, tradition and creation, originality and authenticity, autonomy and order.

Chapter 11 The Contents of Experience: Identity

1. A first distinction must be made between the levels of consciousness as elements of a language situation and the identities involved by the

operations of cultural experience. Secondly, the experience of identity must be distinguished from the experience of reality.

2. Cultural contents and contexts are joined by the intermediacy of experience. All binary systems of relationships neglect this unpredictable intermediacy.

3. Several disciplines, like ethnology, anthropology, psychosociology, and the sociology of culture, extend their research to the field of culture, which cannot be reduced to a closed system.

4. Cultural identity does not coincide with social identity.

Chapter 12 The Cultural Experience of Reality

1. The processes of investing reality with meaning are exemplified by the experimental method.

2. As contents of experience, the notions of reality must be constantly and progressively tested in the adequate contexts of reference.

Chapter 13 The Context of Self-Experience: Identity

The self experiences itself by testing its contents in a new context. The identity resulting from this exchange has its focus outside the individual self, at the center of the cultural situation. The operations by which this identity is created, focused and presented, can be described with sufficient precision with the methods of literary and textual analysis, of which three examples are proposed.

Chapter 14 Reality as the Context of Experience

The experience of reality opens to an inexhaustible context where its operations obey strict rules. The study of the rules involved by an open structure enhances the daring and the severity of scientific research.

Chapter 15 Convergence of Both Types of Experience

Though they seem to diverge in their nature, in their orientation and in their aims, the experience of identity and the experience of reality build up, with their double context, one single whole centered on identity and radiating toward reality. Two types of experience result from the two possible orientations of the same context: toward the center or toward the periphery. Both experiences are complementary and must adjust to each other without losing sight of each other. This unity does not mean that the external context which both experiences have in common has its own intrinsic structure, but that the solidarity of both types of experience results in one single cultural structure which allows for theoretical investigations.

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